

EVALUATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE
CONTEXT OF WORLD PHILOSOPHY.

A Note for consideration

(Dr. Paulos Gregorios)

Has Indian philosophy made a perceptible impact on World thought in recent times? The answer to that question depends on which of the three ways one adopts to conceive Indian philosophy.

- (a) academic philosophy as it comes out of Indian university facilities,
- (b) philosophy regarded as a way of life or
- (c) a theoretically articulated philosophy, coming, not from the academy but from the ashram. (i.e. Sri Aurobindo)

We have of course had, during this century, great philosophical minds, teaching in our universities, ~~beginning with~~ ^{like} Dr Radhakrishnan, who have ^{set a prominent example} also made an impact on the outside world. But most university professors stick to exposition of traditional Hindu or Buddhist philosophy, interpreting the schools, of course with their own creative individuality, but seldom reaching the point of philosophical creativity. Or else they expound some particular school of western philosophy, too slavishly, and after unsuccessfully, imitating their western counterparts. Perhaps the university is the last place from which to anticipate philosophical creativity in India today only a philosophy moulded in the crucible of life can be really creative. In the west, universities were at one time at the centre of life, and their philosophy faculties could create a Hegel or a Husserl, a Russell or a Whitehead, a Heidegger or a Brentano. Our universities have been too far alienated from Indian life to manifest that kind of creativity and the best we have are but compendious scholars, not philosophers as such.

We have done better in non-academic philosophy- in our way of life. We have Gandhi and Tagore, Ramakrishna and Ramana & just to mention a few who have manifested more their lives than their words of way of life which others can emulate. That is probably where we have made our greatest impact during this century and continue to make till this day. But none of the four I have mentioned have produced systematic of philosophy. Even Tagore, profuse of pen, stopped short of academic philosophy and in fact, apart from some feeble attempts (e.g. Sadhana), spurned the academic exercise as such.

Sri Aurobindo is perhaps the exception, the solitary sage who also sought to build some systematic philosophy, while pursuing Sadhana with undivided attention. And for that very reason Sri Aurobindo deserves better treatment than he now receives from the philosophy curriculum of most Indian universities, where dogmatic orthodoxy often away from creative innovation such as Sri Aurobindo's, regarding these merely as heretical.

If among the three categories of Indian philosophy mentioned clearly it is the second and the third which have had more impact on the world- note necessarily on the world of philosophy- atleast more than the philosophy that comes out of Indian universities. This is certainly not to disparage university philosophy in India, but to point out its weakness springing from a triple alienation-

- (a) from the Ashram and its spiritual disciplines out of which alone ~~and only~~ true darsana can come,
- (b) from the day to day concerns of ordinary human beings, such as the acute problems of injustice, human identity and integrity, communal harmony and national unit; and
- (c) from the recent advances in human knowledge, especially in the fields of scientific knowledge: theoretical physics, biochemistry and mathematics (Godel's theorem, for example).

There is to be a serious Indian philosophy which is to make an impact on a world largely hostile to the philosophical enterprise, the overcoming of the triple alienation on the part of the Indian philosophical community would seem to be a necessary precondition.

Very few of our university professors and teachers give the impression of practising what they profess. Students get the impression, either of academic showmanship or of an easy way to make a living, or a combination of both; they seldom see a professor of philosophy whose very life bears witness to the truth of the philosophical maxims he expounds. This problem can hardly be tackled until the Ashram -Academy separation is overcome. For the university, especially our own pale imitations of the western secular university, can hardly be the milieu in which a deep rooted Indian philosophy can flourish. I don't see how the university Grants Commission or any particular university can begin to bring the creative matrix of a spiritual ashram to merge with, or even to impringe upon, the life and curriculum of a university faculty of philosophy. It is more realistic to work for a replication of the Aurobindian pattern & that of savants with great knowledge and a rich experience of life going to Ashrams to pursue Sadhana and do some writing after they have advanced considerably in spiritual attainment. Unfortunately, very few of our great contemporary Yogins have the meticulous scientific and philosophical training and life background of a Sri Aurobindo, and their writings, though highly inspiring, seldom attain the high standards of philosophical respectability.

But even the Yogins are unable, as of today, to enter into the deep problem* structure of world poverty, national and international injustice, human dignity and identity, the arms race and the arms trade, war and peace, economic exploitation and torture of humans, decadence and corruption,

government sponsored killing of its own citizens, and the myriad other miseries which have beset humankind.

Again Sri Aurobindo was a notable exception. Professor of English, terrorist, freedom fighter, assertive nationalist, poet, literary critic, sage, mystic and finally Maharshi, no single Indian has comprehended such a widely and deeply catholic scope of knowledge experience and interests. Solidly opposed to karmic fatalism, and to superficial interpretations of the Maya doctrine and of the caste system as well as to the individualistic pursuit of Sadhana, he sought to redeem the collective soul of nations and peoples, developing in that process a sociology, politics and economics for a "spiritualized society" though his solution, the ideal superman in the gnostic community always lay beyond sociology, politics and economics. Sri Aurobindo's strength, in contrast with the corresponding weakness in most Indian Vedantic philosophers, was that he could see democracy, socialism social justice, freedom, equality, and unity as way-houses on the road to the full realization of God as superman in freedom and unity.

But when it comes down to brass tacks, Sri Aurobindo would insist that only on a spiritual foundation, any genuine and satisfactory economics, politics or sociology can be built. And to that extent our halfhearted defuse of democracy and freedom, our lazily conceived and totally secular five year plans would sound hardly relevant to him.

This is not the place to enter into an evaluation or critique of Sri Aurobindo's massive and profound thought. It was intended to point out only that he tried to relate his philosophy to sociology, economics and politics, though the way he did it may appear too idealistic and utopian to many of us. With roots in the Vedas and in the Gita, Aurobindo never excluded unlike many others, the realm of the socio-economic and political

from the purview of his integral vision. If Indian philosophy is to do justice to itself in the context of world philosophy, it can afford to do no less. But perhaps it may be necessary to go much more deeply into the processes of human social becoming (uenschwurdung) than Sri Aurobindo was able to - in the light of Hegel and Hary, and of western social, economic and political theory.

It may also be necessary for any real deeply rooted Indian philosophy to do justice to the problem of human alienation as experienced by people in urban societies all over the world and as reflected in much of contemporary literature - in John Updike and Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut and T.S. Eliot, John-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, Herman Hesse and Ginther Grass, just to mention a few western authors. Philosophy must deal with life as it is lived - or else it must convincingly argue that all life-experiences of the every day kind are totally meaningless. Indian philosophy cannot make an impact on world philosophy unless it can take into account how people feel and act, not only in India, but also elsewhere in the world.

The third alienation - of philosophy from contemporary scientific knowledge - seems at first are that is impossible to overcome. What philosopher can hope in addition to knowing the philosophical traditions of India as well as the west, also to master the mountainous mass of specialized scientific knowledge. But to think so is to misconceive what is needed. It is not detailed technical scientific knowledge that is needed, but intelligent insights into its revolutionary new discoveries of a general nature, affecting the nature of reality and the nature of thought and perception.

As regards the nature of reality as such, it is now evident, at least in English - speaking circles of the philosophy of science, that any pretensions that the scientific method may have had in the past, to know reality "as it is", objectively and indubitably, have now to be abandoned. The subjective has been shown to be an essential element in all perception, and there is no such thing as a purely objective

Scientific theory is now recognised to be a subjective creation, tested of course in relation to objective reality, but still the fact remains that the "world of objective scientific knowledge" is in essence a human creation - a third World of "objective truths" stored in libraries and books, related to, but distinct from, the first world of subjective consciousness and the second world of objective reality as such. We know, for example, at least at the sub-atomic level, no objective measurement of reality is possible which is unaffected by the process of measurement, which adds its own quantum of energy to that which is known or measured, substantially altering and fixing what is there~~ly~~ mainly as potentiality.

In biochemistry, brain research and computer technology, we are getting new insights into how systems work, how organisms differ from machines or mechanical systems and so on. We still know very little about the nature of life as such, nor about body-mind relationships, though there is reason to hope that some progress can be made soon in these areas.

It is important also to take into account the fact that most philosophers of science (with notable exceptions in Marxism) are today convinced that the methods of modern science can now deal only with certain specific sectors of the spectrum of reality, that poetry and art may give just as valid approaches to the apprehension of the reality, and that it is waive to hold that only scientific truth is "real" truth.

Indian philosophy must take into account the frustrations of western philosophy, which in the modern period, under the inebriating influence of the European Enlightenment, sought to pursue a pre-suppositionless philosophy, freed from all tradition and all authority, based purely on rational cogitation, starting from clear and indubitable perceptions. The cartesian programme has come to grief. Wittgenstein's two attempts and Heidegger's at a deeper level, have both similarly come to grief. Now it is recognised that "prejudice" against which the Enlightenment seems to have had a heavy prejudice, is the essential element

in all perception. In other words there is no such thing as truth without tradition, and all statements can only be seen as man-made maps, not as truth itself. Hans-georg Gadamer and Jirger Habermas have shown us more clearly how the perceiving mind, which fashions truth in its own mould, has its own history of evolution and therefore limitations of horizon.

All this is important to take into account in the creation of an Indian philosophy that can be listened to with respect by the outside world.

If any contemporary Indian philosophy has thus to overcome its triple alienation - from the spirituality of Sadhana, from the world of every day life and from the great insights of modern science, it has also to have a deeper and wider perception of what constitutes Indian philosophy and the darsanika tradition in India.

India's rediscovery of its own identity is far from an accomplished fact. We are still reeling under the impact of the enormous cyclone of western secular thought. Our attempts at reaching against that onslaught and going ~~xx~~ back to our own roots has been at best half-hearted. We would like to make our past manageable to know, and we have created mythus (and western scholars have helped), myths of an "Aryan invasion", a proto-Dravidian culture and so on. And with whom am I, a man from Kerala, to identify? With the Dravidian or the Aryan? Or should I see myself as a mixture of the two? Mixture I certainly am, but I venture to suggest, of more than just two elements.

Let me try here, to enumerate, without any attempt to be exhaustive, of at least ten streams which have merged into the stream of social awareness which has shaped me as a person.

(I) First I must identify in myself a strain of perceptionary habits which I can only call "the primal Vision" shared once by all so-called primitive people of the world, and which I today associate with the tribal peoples of India - the Adivasis and the Girijans.

(2) At a second level, I find that I share in the

Consciousness in the concept of Yajna or Yoga, which to me is true Yoga. The concept of sacrifice is not to be moralistically or ritualistically misrepresented, though it has deep moral implications, and ~~Yajna~~ Yajna without ritual is to me inconceivable. The cosmic egg, the brahmanda needs to be held together, by Yajna or by a deep moving social rite of abandoning self - abandoning it by offering it to the source of all, to all humanity, and to all that exists. I find this Vedic rite-consciousness central to my own Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition.

3. At a third level, as an Indian living in the 20th century, I find in myself a layer that response to cosmic Sakti. I have no objection if you want to relate it to the so-called pre-Aryan or Dravidian religion. Or you can associate it with Saivism. What matters for me is my own perception of myself as an energy configuration system, dependent upon and drawing from the whole complex of energy systems in the cosmos - the energy of sun and moon, of galaxies and planetary systems, of ocean tides and gravitational fields, of electromagnetic and other yet unidentified force fields. I do not claim that this layer is unrelated to the first and second layers. But Sakti is not a matter of the intellect. It is a question of being in tune - to be changed constantly from the enormously complex force-field that our universe is. And if I try to conceptualise the universe merely as a mechanical system which is the object of my knowledge, I am bound to go wrong in my philosophical reasoning.

4. At a fourth level, I must recognise the Buddhist heritage as an important layer in my own identity. Not Buddhism as an intellectual system of four noble truths and the eightfold path, but Buddhism as true enlightenment (as distinct from the rational Enlightenment of the West), as true freedom - freedom from Kama and Trsna, from the myriad passions that unceasingly flail the self and drive it to and fro, from the innumerable false perceptions of the good in the external ~~world~~ world towards which I am almost irresistibly drawn, only to find that, an attainment, all imagined good turns out to be but ash or trash. I find something deep in me

responding to the best in Madhyamika philosophy, especially to Nagarjuna who has convinced me that "it is neither this nor that", that empirical reality is neither false nor true, that everything is caused by "conditioned co-origination", though I would like to include the very concept of pratitya-samutpada as an imperfect conceptual hold on something which can never be held in the intellectual grasp. Of course I tend to assimilate this concept to my own Eastern Orthodox Christian maxim of holding the Kataphatic (affirmative) and the apophatic (negative) in dialectical tension. But the Buddha and philosophers like Nagarjuna have clarified my perception of freedom, including freedom from the desire for a final conceptual grasp of reality. The doctrines of Sunyata and the irrationality of the concept of causality are other great Buddhist contributions to my own perception.

May I be permitted to enter a caveat at this point. The contemporary Indian philosophical tradition suffers from its failure to take the unorthodox Indian systems seriously. And if the light shining from Gautama and Mahavira have nothing to contribute to my seeing my way, I will be so much the poorer as an Indian. Indian philosophy is largely in Orthodox Brahmin hands, and it is natural that they would have inherited a built-in prejudice against the unorthodox Indian ways of thought. But the liberation of Indian philosophy today demands emancipation from these prejudices and a willingness to learn from Nagarjuna just as much as from Sankara, from Mahavira just as much as from Ramanuja or Madhva.

After all, what single religion in history has had such impact on all of Asia as Buddhism? It is the one system of thought which led to "the Indianisation of China" and to the transformation of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, China, Japan and Korea.

The title of an address by Dr. Hu Shih at the Tercentenary Celebration of Harvard University in 1936. See his Independence, convergence and Borrowing Cambridge, Mass. 1937. cited by Kenneth Ch'en. The Climate Transformation

5. At the fifth level I find my own indebtedness to the Upanisadic -Vedantic perspective on reality. I find the quest/ for self-realisation by attaining to the one - in consciousness, beyond consciousness - as exhilarating and ennobling. And I mean more than a pedantic and dogmatic enslavement to the thought of one Lokacharya, be it Sankara, Ramanuja or Madhva, Ramakrishna or Pillai Lokacharya. It is a spiritual quest - not merely an intellectual enquiry. It is a discipline to become what one is.

But I want to pursue that quest in a manner not divorced from the compassion which the Buddha and the Christ have taught me. I do not want to separate my quest from my conviction that my fellow human beings should find food, shelter and clothing and be enabled to live a life worthy of human beings, in societies of peace and justice.

I will thus have to reinterpret the Upanisadic quest, in the light of my understanding of historical reality, which I cannot dismiss as mere Vyavaharika and therefore as unrelated to the paramarthika. I know that our colonial imperialist past, and our neo-colonial-imperialist present are very much a part of the reality, whether Vyavaharika or paramarthika, to which I must relate myself and within which I must find my Indian-human identity today.

Therefore my commitment to the Upanisadic quest for unity must ever remain in dialectical tension with my social concern. And in relation to the latter point, none of the Lokacharyas, even Sri Aurobindo (is he formally a Lokacharya, not having written a Brahma Sutra- bhasya?), can be sufficient guide to understanding contemporary social reality and the way the quest for social justice impringes upon the quest for the one.

6. At the sixth level I perceive the early Greek impact on my Indian heritage. Already from the time of Ashoka, there seems to have been a free flow of ideas between the Greek and the Indian civilisation. The edicts of Asoka speak about his spiritual conquest

in Persia and

It is not idle to presume that the channels so opened for Buddhist monks and missionaries to travel to Central Asia, Europe and Africa were also used in reverse. The apocryphal Apollonius of Tyana reports the debate between Greek and Indian philosophers from a Greek rather than an Indian perspective. If Clement of Alexandria could speak of the Buddha, it is equally conceivable that Greek philosophy came to India through the Brahmins who are reported to be in Alexandria already in the first century, as well as by Greek travellers who visited the courts of Indian princes and conversed with Indian philosophers. I would even detect in this mutual intercourse which must have begun at least three or four centuries before our era, the beginnings of the common features we see in the Hellenic and the Indian traditions - common features like the disparagement of matter, the perception that the soul is a prisoner in the body, and the concept of the worlds that lie between our shadow world and the real world of the mukhas, all these later developed in Greek Gnosticism.

I must recognise this early impact of Hellenic culture on the development of the Indian consciousness, for otherwise I would be in danger of presumptuously presuming that the Indian culture and philosophy developed in a total vacuum, untouched by so-called foreign elements.

I shall not be diffident to recognise as the seventh element the impact of the semitic civilisation and religion on Indian culture throughout the centuries. And I am not speaking merely of Syrian Christianity in Kerala. I am speaking rather, of successive waves of Jewish, Christian and Muslim traders, immigrants, missionaries and conquerors, who had an impact on India already before the coming of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British in modern times. And this semitic impact was by no means confined to maritime India. The North West was particularly inundated with these influences, and what is today Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and Punjab, have been deeply influenced, first by numerically not large but still powerful Jewish immigrants who fled the successive persecutions of the

in Jerusalem around 70 AD. The whole area from the Tigris to the Indus, once comprised in the State of Parthia, was deeply influenced by these Jewish immigrants, in whose wake came also Christians, either fleeing persecution or as in the case of the Persian Christian missionaries, spreading the message of Christ. There were undoubtedly large Christian colonies in the whole of North West India as well as along the coast - right up to Madras. The lack of sufficient research leaves the field free for speculation, but both Ramanuja and Madhva give evidence of reaching to the semitic impact - at least after the tenth century. Was the impact of Christianity and Islam on the Indian tradition purely negative? One would have to be very naive to think so. Even in the 18th 19th centuries when the confrontation was between Hinduism and a militant Western Christian culture, the impact was never purely negative. And in the 8th to 15th centuries when Christian and Muslim cultures confronted India's Buddhist, Jain and Hindu cultures, the impact led to fruitful new constructions and insights in Indian philosophy. Our research on pre-moghul interactions between Islamic civilization and Indian religions still remains quite sketchy.

8. I must briefly mention the Persian element as the eighth. We were very conscious of our debt to Persia in the 19th century. In the 20th we have come to forget it. The great leaders of the Indian Renaissance like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the cultural elite of his time had a thorough grounding in Persian civilisation and culture. Iranian mysticism and the dualism of light and darkness have deeply penetrated the Indian soil, and are today part of my heritage. I cannot out of any false pride, deny what I owe to the Persian.

9. The ninth element can only be briefly mentioned - precisely because it is so recent and so well recognized. This is modern western secular civilisation with its institutions, ideals, concepts, ways of thinking and gathering knowledge; its most decisive elements being critical rationality and the empirical philosophy. We have been so monumentally inundated with this

that we are not aware

for granted. There are so many strands in this impact, and I shall not try to even list them in the short space available here. I simply believe that we have a double task in relation to this most recent impact on our consciousness on the one hand we have to master the techniques of critical Nationality more adequately, in order to reassess all our old perceptions and received traditions. On the other hand, we have to develop sufficient critical distance and objectivity, in order to discern the respective strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and limitations, of critical Nationality itself. Here we must learn from Dilthey and Heidegger, from Adorno and Horkheimer, from Gadamer and Habermas; but we must also bring our own non-western critique to bear upon critical rationality as a method.

10. The tenth element which I must recognise as part of my heritage as an Indian comes from the thought of Marx and Engels, Lenin and later Marxist theoreticians. Whether we recognise it or not, the impact of Marxism is there on the Indian Consciousness - in our aspirations for social justice, for the dignity of the worker, for a society without exploitation and oppression, and for socialism in general. Our conscious reactions to Marxism may have been largely conditioned by the media, as well as by the anti-Marxist predilections of most of our intelligentsia. The tragedy of the matter is that even professing members of the communist parties have only a nodding acquaintance with the basic contours of communist strategy, but no profound schooling in its ideological niceties. The Marxist impact on our society needs to be recognised and reassessed; but perhaps a deeper initiation into the profound subtleties of Marxism both as a tool for socio-politico-economic analysis and as an ideological map for human action can help the Indian philosopher deeply rooted in our own traditions, to be both creative and communicative with the modern world.

I have listed these ten elements which I regard as basic to Indian identity and culture, in a somewhat random fashion. There may be other strands that I have failed to recognize. What I have listed could perhaps be regrouped in a different and more cogent pattern. This list is submitted only as a basis for discussion.

The main point however is this: only an Indian philosophy that has overcome the three alienations and takes fully into account the various strands that go to make up our Indian culture and identity bids fair to make an impact on world philosophy.

Such an endeavour can hardly be a personal or individual effort. I know of no one who has in himself/herself the necessary equipment to cope with the whole range. In the nature of the case the endeavour has to take the form of a corporate or group effort, with intermittent mutual discussion, through several years of sustained toil.

Note on ^{Five}~~Four~~ Hindu Cosmologies

Hinduism is a vast arsenal of complex systems of thought, more diverse in its range than the whole of Greek thought. Here we isolate ~~four~~^{five} of these complex systems, not for exhaustive treatment, but only for illustrating the range of diversity.

In this system 1. Samkhya (6th century B.C.?)
① Samkhya All reality is composed of two entities, Purusha (person) and Prakriti (nature) - the knower and the known. There is no third reality on which the two are contingent. It is a strictly empirical system. Prakriti is a complex multiple reality, composed of ~~four~~^{three} basic constituent qualities, and continuously in the process of evolution, though lacking in consciousness. Prakriti in its primordial form is ~~a~~ matter without qualities, ^{the unmanifest, the cause of all.} The question whence this matter comes is not asked, as one does not ask about the root of the root. It is eternal, pervasive, immobile, uniform, independent, absolute, homogeneous. But in its manifest form, the three gunas or constituent qualities form various permutations and combinations, constitute the manifold of the universe. The Sattva-guna, is buoyant and illuminating; the Rajoguna exciting and mobile; and the lowest, the Tamoguna sluggish and enveloping. These together constitute nature, like the water, the oil and the fire constitute the burning lamp; they ~~they~~^{the} cooperate for one purpose - to give light. So also the three gunas cooperate for one purpose - the emancipation of the spirit.

This spirit is the self, Purusha, not a single world-spirit, but a plurality of persons, each

of which, though in itself inactive, isolated, a neutral observer, in combination with prakriti or nature, appears active, like a lame man with good eyes sitting on the shoulders of a strong limbed blind person.

Evolution proceeds from this combination, going up through Consciousness, ^{to} self-Consciousness and the will to self-liberation, and then ^{the individual spirit reaches out to perfection} through the proper use of reasoning, ^{receiving} oral instruction from a teacher, study, ~~the suppressing of~~ ignorance, inferiority and Complacency, ~~the communicating with others~~, and ~~the practicing of purity~~, ~~the individual spirit reaches out to perfection~~, nourished by the milk that flows from mother nature. When perfect wisdom is attained, the individual spirit sheds its self-Consciousness, realizes its identity with the original primordial Unmanifest, and rests.

It is clear here that Prakriti, or nature, which at first is called matter without qualities, is really the Unmanifest root of all Reality. It is thus a God-substitute. Even this notion of Prakriti as a manifestation of the three constituent qualities in various permutations and combinations, has to presuppose an Unmanifest \neq Nature, about the origin of which one cannot ask any questions.

2 Sankara and Absolute non-dualism

The Vedanta system, often mistaken for the whole of Hinduism, is but one of the many Hindu ~~but~~ systems, though by far ~~the most~~ ^{the most} influential among intellectuals. Its basic text is the Brahma-Sutra or formulas regarding Brahman (ultimate reality), a ~~text~~ compiled text of 555 sutras or formulae, gleaned from the Upanishads. The text in its compiled form probably dates between 500 and 200 B.C.

The three sub-systems of the Vedanta were produced by three great teachers - Sankara (788-820?), Ramanuja (11th century) and Madhva (1197-1276). The three have three distinctive cosmologies, and the following is a mere indication of their general structure. The thought itself is highly refined and systematic, perhaps more so than most Hellenic systems. ~~except Sankara~~

Sankara can be compared to Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas in the thoroughness of his logical structure.

Sankara begins with a much more reasonable first premise than that of Descartes' "I think, therefore I am". ^{but} "I doubt the existence of God, of the world, and of myself; but in that act of doubting, I experience the doubting self". The self is thus the primary self-evident datum as in Descartes, but Sankara goes on to elucidate the true nature of this self, who is the subject of all experience including the doubting.

Of the three possible realities, the

Self, the World, and God, Sankara's analysis proceeds, in a logically coherent manner to deny all ultimate reality to the Cosmos, and then to affirm the total identity of the Self and God. This is the substance of Non-dualism or Advaita, the greatest of conceptual systems in Hinduism.

In denying ultimate reality to the Cosmos, Sankara does not, as some superficial students of his thought ^{accuse him}, say that the world process is an illusion. Nor does he say that the individual self has to merge in the Universal self for its self-realization.

The empirical world is existent. It is real in the sense that it has the capacity to produce sense-impressions on us. The world is not simple non-being (abhava) or a simple void (sunya), as some Buddhist thinkers have conceived it.

* The world is existent at a pragmatic or operational level (Vyavaharika satta) but it has no true being at the ultimate level (paramarthika satta). Sankara's definition of ultimate reality or true being is "that which is not sublated (affected) by subsequent experience". The empirical world, composed of the three constituents of time, space and causality, is continually affected by subsequent experience, and therefore cannot be ultimately real, unless it is capable of ever remaining identical with itself.

Brahman, or God (Sankara rejects the popular conceptions of God) is the ultimate reality,

into Brahman, later to expand and explode again.

upon Whom the world-process depends for its subsistence. Different absolutely from the world, Brahman is the basis and ground of the time-space-causal world.

Totally on the other side from Whitehead, Sankara insists that the world-process in no way affects the being of Brahman. Brahman causes the universe, the Cause not being affected by the effect. But Brahman causes the Cosmos as milk causes Yoghurt. By his projective power of Maya, it is God himself who appears both as the Cosmos and as the individual soul. Maya is a concealing power by which the true nature of the Cosmos and the soul as really Brahman, is not self-evident, but has to be realized as the fruit of spiritual discipline.

The individual soul is actually God himself in a conditioned (upahita) state. Both Man and World are God, perceived under the conditions of Maya. It is God or Brahman who is the "subject" of all human activity; but as a non-participant "subject" unaffected by the action. ^{in fact} The individual soul is ~~not~~ neither agent nor experiencing subject. He remains above all action.

The path of the

into Brahman, later to expand and explode again.

3. Ramanuja

Ramanuja, the Mysore Brahmin, developed his cosmology as a criticism of the cosmology of Sankara, the Kerala Brahmin.

For Ramanuja, the ultimate reality, Brahman, exists only as qualified by two predicates - the mind (self or consciousness, or cit) and nature (prakriti, cosmos, the non-conscious, or acit). Brahman is the subject to which man and cosmos are predicatively related. Like the Neoplatonists, Ramanuja conceives the cosmos as an emanation from God, an extension of ^{God's} body.

To put it more systematically, the God-Cosmos relationship has seven aspects, according to Ramanuja.

① Body-soul relation (Sarira-sariri-bhava)
As the human self controls its body and supports it for its own purposes, the body being subject to the regulative power of the soul, so ~~the~~ all sentient and non-sentient creatures together constitute the body of the Supreme Person. The affinity to Stoic Cosmology is clearly evident. This notion also involves the concept of Brahman causing its own body by expansion in a causal chain; and being capable of making the causality work in reverse so that the effect is swallowed up by the cause in infinite regression, and the whole cosmos is reabsorbed into Brahman, later to expand and explode again.

Chain of Causes and effects

The Substance-attribute relation. God and the World can also be conceived as Qualified subject and qualifying predicate (viseshana-viseshya bhava). All reality exists as predicate of the Supreme Subject, or ultimate Person (parama-purusha). All qualities, all terms, all adjectives, have their ultimate reference in Brahman.

Brahman as subject, however, is not influenced or changed by changes in the universe. The predicates change, but the subject remains unchanged. It is ~~one~~ the one single reality, Brahman that is conceived as Transcendent (para), as operation energy (vyuha), as ~~incarnate~~ ^{in incarnate} (avatara or vitthava), as innate or immanent (antaryami) or as symbol (pratika or idols for worship) for the sake of easier availability.

DOES GEOGRAPHY CONDITION PHILOSOPHY?

BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT OF THE SECOND
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON NEOPLATONISM AND INDIAN THOUGHT.

(Paulos Mar Gregorios, India)

The question has been raised time and again, and supposedly discussed threadbare, as to whether there are any demonstrable oriental influences in the thought of Plotinus. As I suggested at the beginning of the New Delhi Seminar in my brief remarks from the Chair, is it not time that we had a good look at the question itself? What are the assumptions that lie behind the question as it is formulated?

Let us begin by asking ourselves what we actually mean by the term "oriental". To what geographical region does it apply? Would it apply, for example, to the ancient Roman Province or dioikesis of Oriens? If it does then the whole of the West Asian region of the Roman Empire would be meant, with the Diocesan (**Dioikesis** or Diocese means a group of Roman provinces under a Prefect or Viceroy) capital at Antioch-on-the-Orontes. In such a case the word Oriental would not include India in the scope of its meaning. But we know that even in Roman usage, the word meant everything East of the Bosphorus, or sometimes everything outside of Europe. "Oriental" is a very European word. We do well to be careful in the use of this word, particularly in view of the cultural connotations it carries. Sometimes it is parallel to calling the Germanic people "barbarians". It is basically the same spirit, of which we have examples in this volume, by which

some Indian scholars sometimes dismiss western thought too lightly, without any major effort to understand it.

Most people, when they reflect on regional philosophies, think primarily of three groups: Western (mainly Euro-American, Classical, Mediaeval, and Modern Critical) philosophies; South Asian (including Ancient Pre-Vedic, Hindu, Jain and Buddhist) philosophies; and Far Eastern, (Taoist, Confucianist and Chinese Buddhist) philosophies. Certainly there were other philosophies not included in that threefold grouping. Even if there were not, the term "Oriental" would have to include the two latter groups, i.e., everything that is not occidental philosophy would be 'oriental'!

To deny any 'oriental' influence whatsoever in Plotinus is to deny even the influence of Egypt, where Plotinus was presumably born (in Lycopolis, either the one on the Nile Delta, or in the city of that name in Upper Egypt). He was brought up there as a child and he lived there for a good number of years of his adult life; Egypt certainly cannot legitimately be considered part of the Occident. I think we have to be just as circumspect in our denials as in our affirmations, as philosophers worth our salt. Let us then be done with loose statements in this matter, and state categorically: **There is no historical or philosophical ground whatsoever for the affirmation that the thought of Plotinus is totally free from all Oriental influence.**

I presume that the blurb on the Second Edition of Plotinus (7 volumes) translated by Prof. A H Armstrong in the Loeb Classical Library¹ is not the work of Prof. Armstrong himself. In any case someone who has more authority than the present writer should advise the Harvard University Press that it will be in the interests of scholarly accuracy to delete from the front and back flap of all seven volumes of future editions or reprints the unnecessary and incorrect statement: "There is no real trace of Oriental influence on his thought".

Let us proceed further to see what we can legiti-

mately say in this matter. In order to do so, we will be on surer ground if we abandon the term 'oriental' altogether, for it was used by the westerners (Europeans) to denote whatever lay east of their continent; its meaning was vague and imprecise; since Europeans had practically no west before the 15th century, it meant, for many Europeans, just what was not part of their world. It was what was east from the European perspective; the word "oriental" also came to have, perhaps only since the colonial period, a pejorative connotation: for many Europeans, what was not European was somehow inferior.

Besides, even today, both Egypt and Syria are still included by many in the Middle East and would therefore have to be regarded as part of the region denoted by the word 'oriental'. It would be much too laborious and from the start unfruitful to try to disprove all Syrian (e.g. Nemesius) and Egyptian (Ammonius Saccas, Alexandrian culture), and Jewish (Philo) influence on Plotinus.

So what we want to talk about is the influence of specifically Indian thought on Plotinus, not any so-called 'oriental influence' on him.

Now, Indian thought is a fairly wide ocean, as anyone with even a cursory knowledge of India's vast and deep philosophical heritage should know. Summaries of Indian philosophical thought have been attempted by many competent and not so competent scholars, both Indian and foreign. Even the best among them admittedly do not do equal justice to the Carvaka, Jaina and multi-schooled Buddhist as well as several Tantric schools of Indian philosophical experience, practice and reflection. In view of this formidably wide scope of Indian thought, it would not be very precise to speak of the influence of 'Indian Thought' in general on Plotinus. If someone has a positive affirmation to make about such influence, that affirmation would gain in clarity and refutability or critical examinability, if a particular aspect of Indian thought could be specified as having influenced Plotinus.

Perhaps we should consider the appropriateness of attaching any geographical labels at all to various schools of global philosophy. Every school we know is indebted to some school outside of its geographical region, either by way of ideas and categories adapted, or in terms of a polemic that generates new ideas.

If philosophy is some form of universal truth why should geography condition it? We have all to learn to shed some of our geographical and racial parochialisms in this regard. In our time we are called upon to regard all regional philosophies as the common heritage of humanity. All of us are called upon to focus on our common human identity, and to seek new human global philosophical perspectives duly enriched by all regional philosophies.

Now we have to ask a third question as to what precisely we mean by 'influence'. If, for example, the present writer, who is an Indian by birth but trained in the West, has read two books on Chinese philosophy, would he be regarded as having been influenced by Chinese thought? If again as a student at Oxford, he participated in an intensive three-month seminar on "The Tacit Dimension of Knowing" led by the Hungarian emigre' Prof. Michael Polanyi, should he be regarded as influenced by 'Hungarian' thought? Influence is rather too vague a concept to define or measure precisely.

I presume that no one disputes the fact attested by Porphyry that Plotinus was profoundly influenced by the teachings of Ammonius Saccas, whose lectures he attended for eleven long years, after having sampled and rejected those teachers in Alexandria who were recommended to him as the best in that city. Plotinus himself may have regarded Plato and Socrates as his basic saints or gurus and guides. Porphyry tells us that the only feasts Plotinus observed were the traditional feasts of Plato and Socrates. But Ammonius was his living mentor, his preferred teacher. To affirm one is not to

deny the other. If one has to speak about 'influence', we are fully justified, by the available evidence, in stating that Ammonius exerted a strong influence on Plotinus. One may even say that the influence of Ammonius was a decisive factor in Plotinus' reinterpretation of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics.

I know that the question : "Who was Ammonius Saccas?" will probably elicit a yawn from some of you. That is also a question that has been discussed "threadbare". Even at the risk of a few yawns and frowns, let us see where we stand at the end of the threadbare discussion.

It has been suggested by one imaginative speculator that Ammonius Saccas is a latinisation or hellenisation of the Sanskrit "Muni Sakya" or Sakyamuni, which is a well known form of appellation for the Lord Buddha. If that were only demonstrable, we could have regarded Ammonius, whatever his nationality, as a Buddhist monk, who took on for himself one of the many names by which the Master was called. This was actually put forward by no less a scholar than Cardinal Danielou, in his lectures on 'The Fourth Century' at the Sorbonne fifty years ago. Unfortunately it is probably only about as true as the other proposal that Pythagoras, or in Greek Puthagoras, was a Buddhist monk and that his Greek name was simply a Buddhist monastic name he chose for himself, meaning Putha (original Pali or Prakrit which was then Sankritized as Buddha), of the marketplace, taking agoras as genitive of Greek agora (=market). Let us leave aside these entertaining speculations, and get back to the question: who was this Ammonius Saccas? What in his teaching, according to Porphyry, made Plotinus say; "this is what I was looking for!" (**touton ezetoun**)?

I am unable to answer either of these questions. What can be said has been said by H-R Schwyzer and E.R.Dodds.² and other careful scholars. Ammonius lived ca 175-243 A D, while Plotinus lived 204/5-270, both for substantial periods

in Alexandria. Ammonius was thus thirty years senior to Plotinus, who began his study of philosophy in Alexandria in 232, when he was 27.

According to Longinus, cited by Porphyry, Ammonius was the greatest linguistic and literary scholar (philologotatos) of his time, and no one had come anywhere near him in learning. Longinus himself, according to Porphyry "the most discerning critic of our time" (kritikotatos), was a fellow-student with Plotinus of Ammonius, and calls Ammonius both Platonikos and Peripatetikos ³ But Ammonius wrote nothing, and told his disciples not to put in writing anything he said.

For eleven years Plotinus studied with Ammonius. We still need a proper exegesis of that key sentence of Porphyry's:

Kai ap' ekeines tes hemeras sunechos toe Ammonioe, paramenonta, tosauten hexin en philosophiae ktesasthai, hos kai tes para tois Persais epitedeuomenes peiran labein speusai kai tes Indois katorthoumenes.⁴

"And from that day continually staying with Ammonius, (Plotinus) acquired such a mastery of philosophy, that he became eager to gain knowledge of the teaching prevailing among the Persians, as also among the Indians."

Now, putting all that together this is what I get. Ammonius was both a great scholar and a great philosopher, well versed in Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the whole Greek tradition. Plotinus thought so highly of his teaching, in comparison with that of others available in Alexandria at that time, that he not only said the very first day: "This is what I was looking for", but also continued with Ammonius for eleven long years. If any single living teacher influenced Plotinus more than others, it was Ammonius. Ammonius, being an all round scholar, initiated Plotinus into the niceties and nuances of the teachings of Parmenides, Pythagoras, Plato,

Aristotle and the Stoics, so that the latter achieved a good grasp of philosophy in general.

So far I hope everyone agrees. Whether Ammonius was also well versed in Persian and Indian thought Porphyry does not clearly say. What he does say is that the mastery of philosophy which Ammonius imparted to Plotinus was such that it kindled in the latter a great zeal to get better acquainted with Persian and Indian thought. That zeal impelled the nearly forty year old Plotinus to join Gordian's military expedition to Persia, not because he was interested in Romans conquering Persia or India, but because his teacher had told him that he must find out more about Persian and Indian thought. Obviously Gordian's expedition was a failure, and Plotinus had to flee for his life and came and settled down in Rome.

Shall we then say that, after that initial failure, Plotinus gave up every effort to know something about Persian and Indian thought? There certainly were, already by the first century, Brahmins and Buddhists in Alexandria. Did he ever try to contact them? Was literature from India and Persia available in the Alexandrian Museon? By the time we come to the third century, Buddhists have established themselves in Alexandria, with a Vihara or place of teaching of their own. Do you have reason to think that Plotinus gave up the effort to know something of Persian and Indian thought after the Gordian expedition failed? Or did he continue to pursue that interest in Rome, where all roads met, including the ones from Alexandria, Persia and India? I leave these questions with you, and do not want to draw any specific conclusions at this point, except to point out that

- a. Ammonius Saccas taught philosophy in such a way to his student Plotinus that the latter felt it necessary to go and acquire some competence in Persian and Indian thought;
- b. If the above is true, then Ammonius Saacas had some knowledge of Persian and Indian philosophy, which he most likely imparted to Plotinus as his student.

Let us now raise a fourth point. When Armstrong, or anyone else for that matter, says for example that "There is no trace of Oriental influence on his (i.e., Plotinus') thought" his/her argument must be that, if all elements in the Enneads can be explained as originating within the Hellenistic tradition, then there is no need to hypothesize "Oriental influence". But are such scholars, including Armstrong, assuming that the Hellenistic tradition itself is uncontaminated by anything coming from East of the Bosphorus? A cursory examination would reveal that the Hellenic culture and religion were 'Oriental', in the sense of just as much Asian-African as European, through and through.

Hellenistic Religion

By Hellenism is meant that form of Greek culture which was shaped in and spread from the Eastern Mediterranean from the time of Alexander (the first Western empire-builder - ca 330 BCE) for about four centuries. When the Romans took over the Empire in the first century BCE, Hellenism went into a down-swing, till it was resurrected and reinstated as Byzantine culture in the middle of the fifth century. When Plotinus lived and wrote, Hellenism was expressed mostly in the many attempts to revive, reintegrate and revise the ancient Greek religion and thought of Parmenides and Heracleitus, Pythagoras and the other Pre-Socratics, as well as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and others.

Soon after Alexander, Alexandria, the Capital of Egypt, in Africa replaced Athens as the cultural capital of Hellenism. In that process Alexandrian Hellenism had absorbed many Asian-African (Syrian, Babylonian and Egyptian as well as other) elements; it thus became more cosmopolitan in its outlook and could no longer be regarded as strictly European. Neither was Alexandrian Hellenism a secular philosophy. It was fully a religious system in which many philosophies flourished. When Ptolemy I founded the city of Alexandria, its core

was the **Mouseion**, a community of learned and gifted men, headed by a Priest of the Muses. The community had its own ceremonies and rituals, and offering of sacrifices.

Hellenism was thus not just rational philosophy. Fundamental to it was the religious perspective, integral to all genuine philosophical reflection leading to experiential knowledge of Transcendent Reality. Plotinus was no exception. This religious perspective expressed itself in three major areas, which one can discern in Socrates and Plato as well as in the Neo-platonist school as a whole:

- (a) the cult of the gods and daimons in temples and shrines dedicated to them;
- (b) the Gnostic and Mystery religions with their special revelations, initiatory rites and secret doctrines, and
- (c) the widespread magico-religious, or Tantric practices of invoking and propitiating the daemons or the Spirits to perform special tasks.

The main enemies of the three religious aspects of Hellenism were the Jews and the Christians whose influence was growing and threatening the very existence of Hellenistic religion and culture.

The point often overlooked is that all the three religious elements of Hellenism had a heavy 'oriental' aspect to them. The hellenistic culture developed by borrowing liberally from Egypt, Syria, Persia and India, but not apparently much from China. It was always a two-way process. As Greek ideas and culture spread Eastward, the rich culture of the East supplied so much of new insights, so many new ways of doing things, to the Greeks. One can only illustrate here.

Where did Alexander of Macedonia learn empire building in the first place? The Greeks had no such concepts. The Persian wars not only opened up a new world of experience and possibility to the Greeks; it stimulated their resistance to political and cultural domination by foreigners who did not speak their language or behave as was thought proper in their

culture. Scholars have been slow in recognizing the enormous role played by the Persian invasions in stimulating Greek culture to great heights of glory and creativity in art, music, literature, poetry, philosophy, politics, rhetoric, historiography, mathematics, geometry and astronomy in the period immediately following the Persian Wars. I have no reason to think otherwise than that post-Enlightenment European scholars generally exhibit a great unwillingness to acknowledge Europe's debts to Asia. They forget what is acknowledged by learned Greeks, that the Greek civilisation owes much to Babylon, Syria and Egypt.

It was the same pattern in India in the wake of the Macedonian's rape of the Indus valley. The Greeks learned much from the Indians, mainly in philosophy and metaphysics, Indians began to be influenced more by Greek art, sculpture and drama than by Greek philosophy as such, which the Indian philosophers acquired some knowledge of, but found little reason to admire profoundly.

Early Greek religion had sages and seers, but no organized hierarchical structure. It had its oracles and soothsayers, but nothing like the Prophet or the Messiah as in the semitic religions. Hellenism developed various rituals and sacrifices; Neoplatonism developed its own theurgy, but most Neoplatonists simply went along with one or other of prevailing cults: the Eleusinian mysteries, the Dionysian Cult, and the more rational Orphic Cult. Plotinus, probably supported the Orphic cult.

Plotinus was a vegetarian. Vegetarianism was part of the Orphic tradition. He went into a seance in the Iseum or Temple of Isis, and a god appeared to him and held converse with him. Unlike us Moderns, Plotinus shared the belief of his fellow Hellenists in the existence of a world of gods.

The points to be emphasized here are two:

- a. Insofar as Plotinus is a Hellenist, he is under heavy Oriental influence. This applies to his teacher Ammonius

Saccas also. This is particularly evident in Numenius the Neo-Pythagorean of Apamea (2nd century), with whom Plotinus shared many ideas. It is even more evident in the thought and practice of Plotinus' successors in the Neoplatonic tradition.

b. The attempt to make Plotinus totally independent of Oriental influences seems more of an Occidental prejudice than a scholarly proposition based on the evidence. The West cannot lay any such monopoly claims to Plotinus. He belongs to the heritage of the whole of humanity, and he is rejected mainly by dualist Christians and by devotees of the European Enlightenment's persistent superstition - the exclusive reliance on Critical Philosophy. Plotinus never belonged to the isolated Occident which in fact never existed. European culture developed historically by heavy borrowing from Babylon, India, Syria and Egypt, perhaps also from Iran and Palestine, and Plotinus drank deeply from that composite, creative, cosmopolitan culture of the Mediterranean, which today belongs to the world's common heritage.

It is in this context that many of the participants felt that it was a waste of time to discuss the question about "Oriental" influence on Plotinus. We found it much more useful to examine the affinities and differences between mainstream Indian thought and Plotinus.

Plotinus and Indian Thought- Some Primary Divergences and Affinities

1. **The Soul:** We became aware that the primary area in which to explore the question of Affinity/Divergence between the Plotinian Category structure and that of Indian thought in general was the conceptualisation of the Psuche or the Soul rather than that of the One which after all is strictly non-conceptualisable in both traditions.

The Plotinian Soul (**psyche**) is basically Aristotelian-Platonist, and does not easily fit into the categories in which Indian thought conceived the parallel expression **jivatma**. The First Ennead, in Porphyry's arrangement, begins with a discussion of the Soul. It is basically Form or **eidos**. It gives form to body but does not receive anything from the body. It is a simple, non-composite substance, as also the jivatma is in India. Soul and soulness do not exist independently. To be Soul is to exhibit soulness. To psuche is identical with to psuche einai. The soul cannot thus be described in terms of its composite qualities, since it is simple. The 'procession' or coming forth or origin of the

psuche is from The One, through the Nous, born into the world of multiplicity, located in the Universe generated by the World-soul. This World-soul or Soul of All is also generated by the Nous, as is the human Soul, but the latter is not derived from the World-soul. It must make the return journey, the **epistrophe**, back to the nous and through the nous to the One (hen). Nothing like this procession-recession is conceived in the Indian tradition as far as I know. Pralaya-Vilaya or expansion-contraction, yes, but not pro-odos-epitophe, or emanation- return or procession-recession.

The soul of Plotinus is sui generis. It is both indivisible and divisible, or meristos-ameristos, unlike anything else. Indian thought offers no parallel to this conception of the soul or Jivatma being sui generis or divisible-indivisible.

Nor would it be easy to find something like the Soul as one of the Three Principles of Plotinus in the Indian Tradition. For the Indian tradition the jivatma cannot be a distinct hypostasis at all. For Plotinus, it is just three,

no less, no more: the One, the Nous and the Psuche. In Ennead II:9 **Against The Gnostics**, Plotinus attacks the Gnostic multiplicity of principles, and insists that the principles have to be three, no more no less. One does not find such a three-fold Principle - One, Nous and Psuche - in the Indian tradition.

There are, however, affinities between the Plotinian psuche and the Indian concept of the jivatma. The psuche does not suffer; pathe or suffering belongs strictly to the body. Here Plotinus is more Aristotelian than Platonist, yet somewhat original. He makes the distinction between the higher and lower souls. But how can he make that kind of distinction within the psuche which is simple? In order to make the distinction, Plotinus conceives, to this end, a new entity called "the living being" or to zoion. It is this entity that is composite, constituted of soul and body. The first Ennead is about this composite entity, the living being, rather than about the soul as such.

When we come to the later neo-Platonists, we see a slightly more complex pattern of this soul descended into the world of matter, which is no longer the simple **psuche**, but a

composite entity of which the **psuche** is one part. The soul as it descends from the hypercosmic realm acquires its own vehicle, the **ochema**. According to Iamblichus, the **ochema** is created by the **demiurgos**. But the **ochema** is not the physical body; it has a divine origin; it is not something to be cast away. In fact, in Iamblichus at least, the **ochema** is indestructible and therefore eternal.

This certainly is not the place for an extended discussion of the concept of **ochema**; but we note that what theurgy does in Iamblichus is to purify the **ochema** of the soul, permitting its union with a particular god allocated to it. Then the light of the god shines upon the soul in its **ochema** and begins the process of the soul's elevation to the gods. **Ochema** has a parallel in the Indian concept of **sukshma sarira** or ethereal body. In both cultures 'out of body travel' occurs through the **ochema** or sukshmasarira. This non-material body is the vehicle of the soul also for experience in the material world. A comparative study of **ochema** and sukshma-sarira is likely to show great affinities as well as some differences.

But Plotinus' discussion of the soul in Ennead

IV:2 (Armstrong's IV:1) is one of the most sophisticated such discussions in literature. The Soul is not a body, not a harmony of non-corporeal natures, not an entelechy as Aristotle conceives it to be; it belongs definitely to the intelligible world, which in the Platonic tradition, is the home of abiding Reality; it shares in the Divine (tes noetes phuseos, kai tes Theias Moiras, Armstrong IV:1:9-12). There is no attempt to say that the Psuche is identical with the One as in the Indian tradition. Plotinus divides Reality into two classes: one group, the sensible world, is composed of the aistheta, merista kai skedasta, the sensibles, the divisibles, and the perishables. The soul does not belong to this class. But neither does it belong to the other class - the oudame merismon dechomene, ameros kai ameristos, or in no way divisible even conceptually, partless and unpartible, unextended (adiastatos), without spatial location in anything else.

The Plotinian Soul does not belong to either of these classes, but belongs to a third class of its own - the divisible-indivisible (he d'homou meriste te kai ameristos phusis, hen de psuchen einai phamen). This is of course an aspect of the Platonic tradition, where according to Timaeus 35 A1-14, the Artificer of the Universe "mixed a third form from both, from the indivisible which is always in the same state, and that which becomes divisible in the sphere of bodies". The Plotinian soul is an intermediary, a frontier being, between the intelligible world and the sensible world. Here of course Plotinus is not speaking of the individual human soul as such, but about the single unique entity called the Soul, in which the All-Soul and the Human Soul participate. A parallel conception to this cannot easily be located anywhere in the Indian tradition, as far as I know.

The body, whether it be the human body or other bodies in the Universe, come into being just as the Soul, so to speak, goes out of itself to take or form a body, according to Plotinus. Without the All-Soul, the Universe as such has no existence. Existence is what the Soul gives to the body. (Armstrong, IV:3:9). Clearly, Plotinus' conception of the soul is partly original, but its roots are strictly in the Platonic tradition, and seems to have no parallel in Indian thought.

II

General Discussion

In the course of the discussion in the seminar, some other interesting points came up. Here we can only pick up a few highlights of what was indeed a very rich discussion.

1. From the beginning of our discussion it became obvious that it was difficult to define the scope and limits of what is called Indian thought. We have to include Vedic, pre-Vedic, and Avedic thought, the thought of Brahmanas and Sramanas, the Jain tradition which claims to be both avedic and pre-Vedic, the Buddhist tradition which is certainly Avedic, the great Bhakti tradition in its many different forms, Islamic, Sufi and Sikh thought, recent western liberal and western Marxist thought, as well as Christian and Zoroas-

trian thought, all of which flourished on Indian soil and have not only made rich contributions to Indian culture and thought, but also form an integral part of every Indian's heritage. We are certainly unable to do justice to the vast ocean of Indian thought as it has developed through millennia.

When we try to compare Plotinus or other Neoplatonists with Indian thought, it would therefore be wiser to indicate the particular school of Indian thought one has in mind, rather than Indian thought in general.

2. The question came up also about Neoplatonism being both religion and philosophy. In fact classical thought in India as well as in the Mediterranean region, made no distinction between religion and philosophy. Nor did it make religion a compartment of life, as the civilisation of the European Enlightenment often does. In fact the Critical Philosophy of the European Enlightenment writes off any philosophy with the taint of religion as not philosophy at all, since it is dependent on revelation and not exclusively on human reason. For us Easterners, and I think, for many thinking

people elsewhere, this appears to be a persistent and pernicious western superstition, without either scientific or philosophical basis.

We must therefore boldly reject this superstition and take into account the whole religious-philosophical matrix of the Eastern Mediterranean (north, east and south of the sea), when examining the thought of Plotinus and later Neoplatonists. The thought-world of Parmenides and Heracleitus, of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, of the Skeptics and the Stoics, the Epicureans and to a certain extent the Cynics, was always religious and philosophical at the same time. So was that of Plotinus; any non-religious interpretation of Plotinus would be off the mark.

3. The Asian-African (not to use the expression Oriental) thought-world of Alexandria in the third century was one which had fully assimilated the Greek tradition, but was in the process of reformulating it in many different schools, e.g. in Christian (Clement and Origen), Gnostic (the Nag Hammadi documents), neo-Pythagorean (the Therapeutes),

Middle Platonist-Aristotelian (Ammonius Saccas, Numenius), and Stoic-materialist frameworks and categories. Plotinus was not only aware of these schools, but often wrote to question and correct some of the views expressed in these schools. But none of the thinkers of this age made the distinction that some moderns make between Oriental and Occidental. Neither was any of the schools exclusively Oriental or Occidental. The same applies to Plotinus. Plotinus heavily influenced many later systems of perceiving reality, especially Jewish, Muslim and Christian medieval and post-medieval philosophy. All these three traditions are Asian or "Oriental" in origin.

4. Plotinus specially targeted three contending forces in Alexandria and the Roman Empire: Stoic Materialism, Gnostic speculation, and Christian soteriology. There was already much tension in the culture among three approaches to salvation: Theoria, Theurgia and Ta Mysteria. Plotinus definitely emphasized **theoria** or a vision attained by training the mind. **Theourgia** on the other hand emphasized acts of worshipping God or a god, rather than mental-intellectual contemplation, through which **katharsis** (spiritual purification),

ellampsis (inner illumination) and Henosis (becoming one with the Divine) were to be achieved. Many who could not scale the ascents of mental discipline, preferred this way of theurgia in later as well as even in classical Neoplatonist practice. (Porphyry himself, Iamblichus, Proclus and so on.)

Plotinus did not wholly approve the growing practice of theurgy in his tradition. As far as the use of theurgy is concerned, Plotinus seems to be an exception in the Neoplatonic tradition as a whole which was heavily theurgic through and through. Plotinus emphasized **theoria** or mental contemplation, while the Alexandrian tradition as a whole tended to put more faith in **theurgia** and **ta mysteria**; even the Gnostics, who seemed to put more emphasis on a secret **gnosis** and thus to be more intellectually oriented, practised some form of theurgy or ritual.

5. It is specifically in relation to **theurgia** that there seems to be a major gap between Plotinus and his successors, most of whom were Asians who put more emphasis on acts of worship than on mental or intellectual exercises. Both Porphyry and Iamblichus made **theurgia** central. Plotinus

probably practised some form of **theurgia** but refused to give it central emphasis, looking upon **theurgia** with a measure of disdain, as good only for the mentally incompetent.

Prof. Berchman's paper on "Rationality and Ritual in Iamblichus and Proclus", along with his bibliography, is very significant in this connection. Ritual has its own rationality, different from scientific rationality. Theurgy establishes contact with reality at a level different from that of scientific rationality, effects a different entry into the intelligible world and achieves communion with the divine; this is more obvious in his successors than in Plotinus himself.

6. Since Prof. Berchman could not attend the seminar, his paper was not discussed in detail. But when we speak of affinities between neoplatonism and Indian thought, this aspect of Theurgy and its relation to the Tantric and the Vedic-Sacrificial or Purvamimamsa traditions in India should not be overlooked. What the west pejoratively calls 'magic', as Prof. Berchman clearly shows, is a highly rational way of operating upon reality. In India both the Tantric tradition

and the Purvamimamsa tradition are basically theurgic in nature. This means that in seeking for affinities between Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, Theurgy-Tantrism should receive a fuller treatment than it hitherto has.

7. We sought to compare Plotinus' One (**to hen**) with the Indian concept of **ekamadvitiyam**. In both traditions, the limits of the conceptual are recognized. The conceptual cannot by any means lead us to the One of Plotinus, or to the ekam of the Hindus. In this most Indian traditions would agree with Plotinus that the conceptual cannot attain to the Transcendent Divine, and that the One has to be known in a way other than the conceptual. In Sankara Vedanta, we call it **paravidya** or the knowledge that transcends. Modern critical philosophy has no such category, and this seems to be its basic weakness.

8. Both traditions recognize the key epistemological role of self-purification in attaining to the knowledge of the Divine. While the Plotinian tradition refers to this need of **katharsis**, the Indian tradition goes to great lengths in working out and prescribing the physical and mental exercises

which make one capable of receiving the grace of divine illumination and unity. Not only in the Yoga System of Patanjali, but also in the Bhagavadgita, these systems of nidhidhyasa are described at length. It would be a useful study to compare the purificatory disciplines in various Indian schools with the Greek disciplines of self-purification.

9. It was suggested that the comparative roles of eros and bhakti in the ascent of the soul to the divine would be worth careful study. Equally important would be a comparative study of the role of worship, or Indian **aradhana** and Greek theourgia (related to the concepts of eusebeia and theosebeia) in self-purification.

10. Both traditions acknowledge that the One is beyond all predicates. If the Good (to Agathon), the True (to Alethinon) and the beautiful (to Kalon) are not predicates of the One, what are they? According to Plotinus, the Good is only another name for the One, but in no way a predicate⁵. If Brahman is Sat-chid-ananda, how are sad, chid and ananda or Truth, Consciousness and Bliss related to the predicateless

and partless Brahman? The Indian answer would be the same as the Plotinian, namely that these are merely different conceptual formulations of the same reality.

11. We came to the conclusion that there were substantial divergences between the Indian tradition and the Neoplatonic tradition in the question of what constitutes True or Transcendental knowledge. In India paravidya or Transcendental knowledge demands overcoming the distinction among knower, known and knowledge, or **jnata**, **jneya**, and **jnana**. In the western tradition however the distinction between subject and object seems to be regarded as essential for all knowledge. Is this true? What then would be the western understanding of the logic of the infinite wherein all distinctions ought to vanish and all things ought to merge into each other as a single entity?

12. Our discussion on the relation between the One and the nous-psuche needs to be pursued further. The notion of emanation, if taken literally, would locate the One in time and space, which would make it finite. Emanation(**pro-odos**) can at best be taken only metaphorically, to denote the relation between the One and the Nous-Psuche. Obviously the One is not

located in one point in space. It is both infinite, omnipresent and invisible. Would the procession or pro-odos of the kosmos noetos or the Nous be comparable to the Indian Samkhya concept of the vyakta or manifest universe as coming forth from the Unmanifest (avyakta)? Neither the concept of pro-odos nor that of **epistrophe** or return, seem compatible with the Indian tradition as a whole. In the Sankhya, the relation between the manifest and the Unmanifest is not spelt out so clearly. What is recognized in both traditions is that the Manifest world of our daily experience has come forth from an Unmanifest Reality, upon which it is contingent. But the Plotinian concept of emanation finds no precise parallel in Indian thought. In Plotinus himself the concept of emanation is not philosophically clear, for emanation is undoubtedly a spatial concept, which cannot be applied to the One who transcends space. The analogies which Plotinus gives, like a light-source emanating light or a fragrant substance emanating fragrance, imply a source in space from which the emanation spreads around to the contiguous space. In the case of the One, the source is not in space; the concept of emanation does not help the understanding in relation to the One and the Many.

13. We had an extended discussion on the relation of any proposition to truth. Certainly propositions are not the only form in which human beings can linguistically express themselves. We agreed that propositions do not grasp the truth fully; this is so in Plotinus and in Indian thought. We saw that language can be used metaphorically as well as poetically, to supplement and clarify propositional expressions of truth. But do metaphors and poetry get anywhere closer to reality than propositions? Perhaps metaphors and propositions have their significance in their power to evoke inner experience in a way propositions seldom can. The perception of ultimate reality however always eludes the linguistic medium in every form. This applies also to concepts like emanation,

when used as a description of the relation between the three principles of One, Nous and Psyche. Emanation is a metaphor; it can illuminate us only analogically or metaphorically, not propositionally.

14. Finally, both in Neoplatonism and in Indian thought, the metaphysics is not functionally as important as the praxis of a discipline or nidhidhyasa which leads to enlightenment. The metaphysics both prepares for and conditions the experience; metaphysics arises out of experience as an attempt to conceptualise it. We thought it would be healthy to keep this in mind in all serious philosophical discussion. Critical philosophy's major weakness is this over-emphasis on the conceptual and the propositional, and the under-emphasis on the discipline or katharsis.

We concluded that the only option open to us was to begin planning for another Seminar or conference, in India, with wider participation, on The Neoplatonist and Indian Traditions (not just thought, but including spiritual disciplines, particularly the Yogic and Tantric traditions), in the near future.

1. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1989, front and back flaps.

2. See E R Dodds, Numenius and Ammonius, Entretiens Hardt V, See also Schweitzer, Plotinus Intro cols 477-81.

3. Armstrong, Plotinus. Vol. I. pp Greek text, 56, 58, Eng. 57, 59.

4. Armstrong, vol I, Gk p. 8 Eng p.9

5. See Enneads II:ix:1 in "Against the Gnostics"

The relation of a particular Indian philosophical system to the socio-economic and cultural milieu within which it arose has not yet been articulated in a generally accepted form. Some think that all philosophical systems form part of a super-structure largely determined by the underlying sub-structure of socio-economic relations in a given society. Others on the contrary see the contribution of the milieu to a philosophy as minimal. It will be useful, wherever adequate data are available to assess the extent to which the cultural milieu supplies the basic categories of thought, shapes the perception of the central problem in human existence, and influences the choice of life-ideals to be pursued. One may also find, on examining the evidence, that the proportion between the influence of social milieu and that of the personal experience of the philosopher varies from case to case.

It has been argued, but not yet convincingly demonstrated, that the purpose of most systems of philosophy is to legitimize existing power structures and stratifications of authority, or alternatively to question authority structures in society, in order to validate the claims of a group slowly climbing to the top. The issue needs to be studied in relation to a representative sampling of Indian philosophical systems.

Even those who argue for the strict sub-structure - super-structure dichotomy admit that ideas arising in the superstructure in turn react on the sub.structure giving direction to needed social and economic change. A Seminar to assess Indian philosophy in the World Context can profit from studies, from somewhat opposing ideological standpoints on the question &

To what extent, if any, does the socio-economic and cultural milieu influence the origin of and become influenced by the spread of particular Indian philosophies ?

Does society create philosophy ?

Does philosophy change society ? How ?

The studies should document the answer to these questions, as well as to the question of how social and personal experiences influence or shape a philosophy.

It has been argued, for example, that the caste system was a way of resolving social conflict. Systematic and rigorous Indian philosophy does not, some say, engage in overt justifications of the caste system, or seek to legitimise the domination by one caste over the others. Is this so ?

Does any school of Indian philosophy (e.g. Madhwa) consciously strive to provide galvanisation for a society under threat of being overwhelmed by a strident outside culture ?

Many Indian philosophies appear to present a pratipaksha to an existing pratipaksha. Was this a social need of one group asserting itself over against another ? Is this not a reflection of the socio-cultural milieu in a particular philosophy ?

On Poverty of Philosophy and Philosophy of Poverty The Task of Indian Philosophy Today

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

Kathleen Raine, the renowned English poet, said in Delhi the other day, that India was like a poor man in rags sitting on a treasure-heap. She also cited a prominent Indian now living in Britain who thought otherwise; to this expatriate Indian our country was more like a monkey about to cast away into the river a priceless jewel in its hands.

Whichever image we choose, it does not quite fit or show us the way forward. How nice it would have been, if all that India had to do were: get off the heap, dig into it, pick up a few pieces of the treasure, sell it in the market, get a decent set of clothes, a house and a car, and live happily ever after!

Neither is the monkey image, as stated, more helpful. With some qualifications, however, the allegory may prove useful. The main qualifications would be, (a) that the monkey is not the whole of India, but only the ruling and intellectual elites of our country (the two seldom coincide); and (b) that the monkey has *already* thrown the jewel into the river, and is after nuts and fruits.

Of course the poor man sitting on the treasure heap can be educated to understand the value of the treasure he is sitting on; in the case of the monkey, it seems more difficult to train it to appreciate the value of the jewel it has already cast into the river; it could hardly understand that the jewel can be exchanged in the market for fruits and nuts, the monkey's major commodities for consumption. In any case, the monkey has already cast the jewel into the river; it is hardly capable of recovering it; our particular monkey has demonstrated its over-all incapacity in the four or more decades of our Republic.

The Indian Council of Philosophical Research, I understand, has now an ambitious project to recover the jewel - a monumental, multi-crore, multi-scholar study of the Indian Heritage. Though I am a member of the I.C.Ph.R., I have no clue as to how the project is to be funded, or how it is to be executed in detail. Deficit national budgets can not be friendly or accommodative to an expensive sociological-philosophical-historiographic research project. And the monkey's knowledge and skills may very well prove to be somewhat inadequate for the job. But it is indeed a job that needs to be done.

If philosophy is, as Hegel held, the "thought of its time"¹ as articulated by one people at a given time based on its particular tradition as well as its particular historical Gestalt-i.e. its form of Government, its ethical and social norms, its habits and customs, then Hegel (or Fichte) cannot be right in his earlier view that there can be only one true philosophy because there is only one Human Reason.²

Hegel, and after him Heidegger, held that authentic philosophies in the world today are only two - Greek and German.

"We have, therefore, in all, two philosophies: the Greek and the German...The history of philosophy thus falls into three periods: Greek Philosophy, Philosophy of the Middle Ages (in Europe, P.G.) and Philosophy of modern times. In the first, Thought becomes general and definite; in the second, the basic search is for the Essence (*Wesen*) through formal reflection; and in the third the Notion (*Begriff*) becomes the foundation. This does not mean that

1. "Die Philosophie als der Gedanke ihrer Zeit", *Hegel's Vorlesungen Ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1971/1982 pp 73ff.

2. *Jena Lectures*, German Edition, Suhrkamp, p. 172. Fichte was closer to the truth in holding to the view that the one true philosophy was beyond conceptual knowledge. See e.g. J.G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis/New York, 1956 pp 81ff.

Thought was the sole content of the first; it contained also Notions and Ideas (*auch Begriff und Ideen*)³

The reason why Hegel thought that only Greek and German philosophy mattered was not that he was totally ignorant of Chinese and Indian Philosophies, to which he devotes 30 pages in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.⁴ His knowledge of Indian philosophy, he admits, was based mainly on H.T. Colebrooke's Essay on the Philosophy of the Hindus,⁵ and perhaps on the less philosophical work of Friedrich von Schlegel: *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (Heidelberg, 1808). For Hegel, the task of philosophy is the construction of Absolutes in Consciousness and reconciling them with each other.⁶ And for Hegel there are only two Absolutes: *Geist und Natur* or consciousness and world, or Subject and Object. He knows that in India the Sankhya system of Kapila identified the two Absolutes as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*. He also says that the ruling idea of Indian philosophy is the oneness of nature and soul:

"The Idea, which for the Indians was available, is the Oneness of Nature and Soul; and this oneness is what creation means"⁷

Hegel was of course referring to the Early Sankhya of Kapila as interpreted by Colebrooke; he does not show much awareness of Sankara or Ramanuja. We can therefore forgive Hegel. There is no justification, however, for Hegel's dictum being repeated by Heidegger in our century as true. In both cases European *hubris* was certainly operating.

But that is not our major concern in this paper. Our attempt here is to get closer to the central task of philosophy, and to see how Indian Philosophy can cope with that task today.

THE CENTRAL TASK OF PHILOSOPHY AS A WHOLE

Let us take as a starting point for reflection Hegel's dictum that the central task of philosophy is to identify absolutes and to relate them to each other, to ourselves and to everything else.

For Hegel, as we have said, the two Absolutes are *Geist und Natur*, i.e. Spirit and Nature; for Descartes and Husserl they are *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or consciousness and world, for Samkhya it is *Purusha* and *Prakrti*; for a modern philosopher like Morris Cohen it is Reason and Nature.⁸

Morris Cohen, as a Philosopher of Science, is particularly interesting for our reflection on the absolutes and on the task of philosophy. Cohen insists that "philosophy is primarily a vision and all great philosophers have something in common with the poets and prophets". In that sense it is not like modern science. But serious philosophy, with vision or wisdom as its substance, is less like poetry and prophecy in its other aspect—that "it must, like science, be also vitally concerned with reasoned or logically demonstrable truth".⁹ That is, philosophy, unlike poetry and prophecy, and like science, is obliged "to introduce order and consistency into our vision, to remove pleasing but illusory plausibilities by contrasting various views with their possible alternatives, and to judge critically all pretended proofs in the light of the most rigorously logical rules of evidence".

Morris Cohen tells us that the way to do philosophy today is to confront the great classical views of the world at the heart of the universal humanistic tradition, "with the painfully critical methods by which the natural sciences have built up their great cosmic vistas". Cohen emphasizes science's

3. Hegel, *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, German Text, *op.cit.* p. 131

4. *op. cit.* pp. 141-170

5. Published in *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. London 1842, read by Colebrooke on June 21, 1823

6. *Jena Lectures*, German Text, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt (Vol. 2) p. 25

7. "Die Idee, die also bei den Indern vorhanden ist, is Einigkeit der Natur und der Seele; und diese Einigkeit ist dann Schoepfung".

Lectures on The History of Philosophy, German Text, *op. cit.* p. 154

8. Cohen, Morris R. *Reason and Nature-An Essay on the Meaning of Scientific Method*, London, Collier-Macmillan, 2nd edn. 1953/1964

9. Cohen, *op. cit.* Preface, p. ix

method rather than its results. But he also highlights a principle which science often ignores - the principle of polarity in reality. This principle states that "opposite categories like identity and difference, rest and motion, individuality and universality, etc., must always be kept together though never identified".

This principle of Cohen's seems to be a legitimate compromise between the principles of the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction on the one hand, and the principles of Heracleitan-Hegelian-Marxist dialectic on the other. Today the challenge for Indian philosophy is to effectively execute this confrontation between the great richness of our classical Indian tradition on the one hand and the hard-won insights and critical methods of modern science on the other. Not that either the classical tradition, or the modern scientific tradition constitutes an Absolute in itself. But these are the main resources available to Indian philosophy today.

THE TASK OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY TODAY

Polarities seem to be at the heart of all great philosophies. The consciousness-world of subject-object polarity is common to most philosophies. In our own tradition there are many instances of such polarity, and I want to mention just three out of Indian thought-Samkhya, Nagarjuna Madhyamika and Sankara Vedanta. We should be able to see that such polarities depict both identity and difference, and are usually reconciled by putting one as more fundamental than the other.

In Samkhya the *prakrti-purusha* polarity seems to lead to a necessary dualism, since only *Prakrti* and not *Purusha* is a manifestation of the single reality of the *pradhana*. The *pradhana* or *avyakta* or *avyakta* concept does not reconcile the two principles, and the polarity remains unresolved, as Sankara clearly showed. Higher consciousness or *Purusha* does interact with *Prakrti*, and the latter becomes active only in the presence of the former, which is both multiple and uncaused. As Isvarakrishna's *Samkhyakarika* explains it, (*Karika:XXI*) *Purusha* and *Prakrti* are necessary to each other as a lame man and a blind man need each other:

*Purushasya darsanartham, kaivalyartham,
tatha pradhanasya
pangvandhavad ubhayor api
Samyogas tatkrta Sargah*

But by this *samyoga* between *Purusha* and *Prakrti* or *pradhana*, they do not become one - they are two realities in conjunction with each other, resulting in the creation through the *triguna* inherent in *Prakrti*. And consciousness itself is not an attribute of *Purusha*, but simply an expression of *buddhi*, which comes from *Prakrti* and not from *Purusha*

There is thus a permanence of duality in Samkhya, which is what both Sankara and Nagarjuna sought to remedy. They use two different approaches in remedying Samkhya dualism and so come to quite different conclusions. Neither conclusion, it seems, is sufficient for our purposes today; and it is here that we need a new upsurge of creativity in Indian philosophy today. We need a fresh effort to identify the absolutes and reconcile them in the *Zeitgeist* of our time and in our complex social *Gestalt*. This I believe is the task before Indian philosophers today.

If the I.C.Ph.R. project gets funded and properly executed, that will, let us hope, provide the basis for this new effort, if it turns out to be less biased and less one-sided than previous efforts to depict the Indian heritage. We do have fair access to the other element - the scientific method and insights, as well as critical rationality, though we have not yet produced an adequate assessment of this element from within the Indian tradition in its richness of variety.

The more difficult task will be to confront these two elements with each other in a creative manner so that the confrontation generates new insights and fresh guidance for our path into the 21st century both as a nation and as people - for our educational policy, for our science/tech. policy, for our developmental and environmental policies, for our social-cultural renewal, and our political economy.

I personally have neither the competence nor the knowledge necessary for this task. Only a group with varied gifts and abilities can adequately cope with this enormous task. The purpose of my address is only to see how philosophers and others respond to the very idea of such a task.

What we are looking for is not a new system but a fresh start for the ongoing dialogue. I am convinced that the day of systems is gone. Truth cannot be captured in systems; Plato in the west saw that very early. And in the Socratic Dialogue, there is a continuous confrontation between opposing ideas. Those who make a system out of Plato do violence to the rich variety of his thought, and to the intention of his method, which is not to arrive at dogmas in propositional form, but to facilitate the quest for Unity in Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

That is also what we need in India today - not a new system.

THE GREAT NAGARJUNA AND SANKARA EFFORTS

I wish Indian philosophers would know as much about Nagarjuna, Dharmakirti and Dinnaga as they do about Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. In the rigour of their logic, and in their application of critical rationality to the deepest issues of life the Buddhist *darsaks* are unsurpassed. The world is only beginning to do justice to the study of Nagarjuna. In the land of his birth, Nagarjuna studies are making only slow progress.

Philosophically the two absolutes of Nagarjuna are *sunya* and *pratityasamutpāda*. For Nagarjuna these two are simply the One reality. It is the same Non-Being or *Sunya* which is experienced as dependently co-originating world of Samsara. Here Sankara seems to have received the clue for his Brahma-māya doctrine.

Nagarjuna sees the Ultimate Reality as devoid of form or self, without determinations or qualities. Nothing in the *Samsāra* which is *pratityasamutpanna*, has any *svabhāva* or intrinsic nature.

The main differences and similarities between Nagarjuna and Sankara seem to be the following.

- a. Sankara regards Scripture (Vedas, Upanishads, Brahmasutras, Gita etc.) as essential for true transcendent, liberating knowledge or *parāvidya*, while for Nagarjuna, the Scriptures are not necessary; what is needed is only a *guru* or spiritual sage who can help one along on the path to Nirvana. But ultimately one should extinguish the fire of one's own desire and attain Nirvana by one's own mindfulness, knowledge and discipline. No scriptures are necessary for this.
- b. For Sankara, Brahman or Ultimate Reality is not *sunya*, but *Satchidananda*, though conceptually uncognizeable. For Nagarjuna *sunya* is *nirvana*. Brahman, for Sankara, is the Supreme Self; for Nagarjuna there is no Self either in the Jiva or in the Brahma.
- c. Both Sankara and Nagarjuna seek liberation from attachment to and involvement in Samsara. The world of every day experience, the phenomenal reality, is unreal in the *paramārthika* sense, for Sankara; while for Nagarjuna, it is neither real nor unreal, neither both real and unreal, or not real and not unreal. It is simply a phenomenon — a dependent co-origination.
- d. Both Sankara and Nagarjuna call for discipline to attain mukti or nirvana. The disciplines are different; but all disciplines are for attaining mukti or nirvana. The *dharmasastrās* and *vinayas* have no worldly end. They are simply ancillary to liberation from the wheel of births and deaths.
- e. Both Sankara and Nagarjuna overcome the duality by subsuming the lower within the higher and identifying them. For Nagarjuna, *Sunya* is *pratityasamutpada*. For Sankara *maya* is *Brahman*; and the world is simply the *vikshepa* of Brahman through the power of *maya* and its grasping by human *avidya*. In this sense, it is dependently co-originating, i.e. dependent on *maya* and *avidya*.

We see clearly that the similarities are greater than the differences. The differences are mainly in the concepts of Brahman and Jiva. The world, the *samsara*, is something to be renounced and

liberated from. The *paramârthika* is attained only by the renunciation of the *vyāvahârika* for both our great sages.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The new task for Indian philosophy is to find a more creative relating of the *paramârthika* and the *vyāvahârika* levels of reality. The *Zeitgeist* of our time demands an Indian philosophy that can see more meaning at the *vyāvahârika* level, so that it is not something simply to be renounced or escaped from. As Vivekananda once said, only one in ten thousand sets out on the path of Brahmajijnasa. Of those who so set out only one in ten thousand actually attain *jivanmukti*. What happens to the remaining 99 million 999 thousand 999?

We have of course in our tradition, the great concepts of *Karmayôga* and *dharmasâstra*. We have not yet fully linked and integrated the two. This is a task for Indian philosophy. But this calls for a redefinition of *karmayôga* and a reformulation of the *dharmasâstra* in terms of our times and conditions. This includes relating our revised *dharmasâstra* integrally to a new democratic *rajanîti* (Politics), *arthasâstra* (economics) and also *kâmasâstra* or planning of desired goals for society. All of these will have to be liberated from their traditional individualistic bind, and put into a comprehensive personal-social, cultural-educational, political-economic framework, so that it makes sense to the people of today with their aspirations and perceptions.

Dharma itself would have to be re-interpreted, not as duties and obligations of each individual as a member of his caste or profession, but as a general theory of what reality is like (that is what *dharma* in its more classical sense means), and how we are to relate to that reality, not only at *paramârthika* and *vyāvahârika* levels, but also on the personal and social planes.

Theoretical physics can help us at this point. It will have to be a life-affirming philosophy, affirming life at both ultimate and this-worldly levels, and on the personal as well as the social levels. It will have to get beyond thinking in terms of mere commodity and investment, but provide for meaning in culture, art, literature, music and so on. It will have to develop a new attitude towards the basic relations — employer-employee, man-woman and parents-children. It will have to give new guidelines for the creation of appropriate institutions for state craft, for economic production, for cultural creativity, for education of the people.

But behind it all, there must be the true *darsana*, the liberating vision. Just integrating the physical and social sciences into a secular world-view cannot do that job. The secular world-view, that the world open to our senses is the only reality that exists, is the most senseless, unscientific, dogmatic superstition which the science and scientism of yesterday created. At that point our elite would have to be liberated from our enslavement and addiction to European Enlightenment's Critical Rationality.

As A.N. Whitehead once said, a scientist imbued with the purpose of proving that there are no purposes in nature can only be a curious object of scientific study. That kind of science, which denies even teleology of a stochastic kind, will have to be abjured as pure unscientific dogma. Without first being emancipated from enslavement to scientism, no true Indian philosophy can arise.

But even more important are the words a western poet, (T.S. Eliot - *The Wasteland*):

Unless the eye catch fire,
The God will not be seen.
Unless the ear catch fire,
The God will not be heard.
Unless the tongue catch fire,
The God will not be named.
Unless the heart catch fire,
The God will not be loved.
Unless the mind catch fire
The God will not be known.

Sense and mind, but also heart and spirit must be kindled by the glow of a new vision - a new *darsana*. But this *darsana* must be different in two respects from the individual's *moksha* or *nirvâna*

as traditional philosophy understood it. It must relate to a people's vision, not only that of a few select individuals in isolation. Today people are assumed to have a vision - e.g. that physical poverty is bad and affluence is what is to be sought after; that more commodities for consumption are more important than the whole of human society attaining justice and peace; that education is an investment for economic development, and so on.

The individual picks up this philosophy from society. There may be a small number of individuals who dissent from the elite version of society's view - in thought and in practice. But it is the society's view as interpreted by the elite to which our institutions cater. It is this current social vision that has to be replaced by a more human *darsana*. Philosophy's poverty is that today it is unable to affect or transform the existing social vision. Philosophy's poverty is that it has no adequate philosophy of true poverty, which is not so despicable, and of true wealth, which is radically different from affluence. Indian philosophy now seems too feeble to have much impact on the social *darsana*, that now prevails, and to lead society to a new *samyagdarsana* which is also a *samajadarsana* for *Samājamukti*.

The other respect in which a new Indian philosophy, the new *samyagdarsana* for *samajamukti*, must struggle for clarity is in seeing anew the *paramārthika* and the *vyāvahārika* as positively related. It is not from the *vyāvahārika* as such that we need *mukti* or liberation. But once purged of its evil elements, the *vyāvahārika* (V) can reflect the *paramārthika* (P); it is only by such reflection that the *vyavaharika* begins to make sense.

A total denial of the *vyāvahārika* as *māya*, as product of *avidya*, as something to be escaped from, will not do. Neither will do the secular assumption that (V) is the only reality there is. (V) cannot make sense except in relation to (P). But (P) is not totally disjunct from (V); and (V) is not merely a negative reality to be abolished or abjured by true *Vidya*. (V) must be made a reflection of the *Sad*, *Chid* and *Ānanda* which constitute (P); or if you like, Truth, Beauty and the Good; or Love, Joy and Peace, or Freedom, Wisdom, and Power, or Kingdom of God or whatever else the *samyagdarsana* sees (P) to be.

It will never be a perfect reflection. It will always be calling for improvement and growth; it will always be mixed with the overpowering strength of the "opposite" or "Evil", and therefore always entail perpetual struggle. But it is only in that struggle and not in seeking private individual *moksha* or *nirvana* that the person in (V) becomes a reflecting point of (P).

Indian philosophy's task is to save India and the world from both Communalism and Secularism. The latter is a false antidote to the former. Only a relating of the *paramārthika* to the *vyāvahārika*, but not in a sectarian sense, and not in a pattern in which one religion dominates the other, can do. Of course the secular liberals and marxists should also be in the debate which seeks to relate the Transcendent to the Immanent in a socially creative new Indian *darshana*.

In a world where cosmic awareness is fast disintegrating, where global poverty and injustice seem to be growing rather than receding; where, in the words of Kautilya, "the crookedness of the intellectuals" has already betrayed the sacred trust which people had once put in them; where the environment is fast becoming hostile to life; where new clouds of war are seeming to gather and militarism still rules; where the transition from nationalism to globalism seems still so desperately slow; where ruling ideologies of both Marxism-Leninism and Western Liberalism lie in ruins; can Indian philosophy help the eye and the ear and the tongue of humanity to catch fire, so that its mind and heart becomes aglow with a new *samyagdarsana*, which is also a *Samājadarsana* which relates the *paramārthika* and the *pravartika*?

India's philosophical tradition has the capacity for *darsana*, some of the most original in the world like Samkhya, Madhyamaka and Vedanta. This capacity is latent today in our academies and ashrams. Can it be rekindled? Can we quicken our wills, sharpen our skills, and discipline our social lives, in order to do so? The answer to that question lies with the Indian philosophical community.

The treasure is there; the monkey has cast it in a place in the river from which it can be recovered. To recover it, the will must be quickened, the skills need to be resharpened; and a new social and personal discipline must make us capable. Without a personal discipline of acquiring *amalaprājña* for the philosopher, and a social discipline of greater justice, there can be no true philosophy. A tall order - but not too tall for the invincible spirit of Indian humanity.

THREE BRIGHT STARS

IN THE FIRMAMENT OF INDIAN THOUGHT

NAGARJUNA, DIGNAGA AND DHARMAKIRTI

A Series of Two Lectures at the Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre,
New Delhi, 16th and 19th September 1994

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

Anirodham anutpadam anucchedam asasvatam
Anekartham ananartham anagamam anirgamam
Yah pratityasamutpadam prapancopasamam sivam
Desayamasa Sambuddhah tam vande vadatam varam

Uneminct, Unoriginate, Unannihilate, Uneternal
Not Monistic, Not Pluralistic, Not coming to be, Not going out of
existence
That conditionally co-originate, Abater of the illusory manifold,
Auspicious,
Great Teacher of the Nation, Well-Enlightened, Thee I salute, O
noblest of speakers!

(Opening Invocation of **Madhyamakakarika**)

Let me first express my profound gratitude to the Tushita Mahayana Meditation Centre and to Sri Kabir Saxena for this gracious privilege you have extended to me in asking me to speak to a few friends about three largely unnoticed or ignored stars on the firmament of Indian thought. My desire is that more Indians will come to hear of them.

We as a people ought to be proud of all three: Nagarjuna (ca 150 - 250), who already in the second century of our era attained a level of

astuteness of dialectical analysis, both unprecedented and also unsurpassed, before or after, not only in India, but in any of the cultures of the world as far as I know; Dignaga (480-540), the Master of Indian Logic and Epistemology, who took those disciplines to the highest conceptual formulation, still very relevant to us in the context of our cultural crisis in India; and Dharmakirti (ca 600-660), called by Prof. Stcherbatsky the "Kant of India", who took Dignaga's thought to its high culmination.

At the outset I must express my regret that I myself had for many years failed to notice these three bright stars in the firmament of Indian thought. Only of late have I noticed them and come under their charm. My education in India was not only inadequate, but also sadly misleading, covering up, or at least never drawing my attention to, some of the noblest achievements of Indian thought and experience. More than half of my educated friends to whom I mentioned these three names, had never even heard of them before. Only some had just heard of Nagarjuna, but Dignaga and Dharmakirti were unknown names to many. Their education too was defective, like mine.

The reasons for this obscuring or ignoring of some of our great Masters of the Past, are not far to seek. Most educated Indians have heard about Sri Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva who are regarded as teachers of the world - lokacharyas. Nagarjuna, Dignaga and Dharmakirti, the three that I am now introducing, have had a far greater role in teaching the world, and in teaching Indians as well. If the Indian memory has to be jagged into acknowledging these three who can be regarded as among the best India has ever produced, the reason is that we have been fed a very distorted and one-sided image of our own great Bharatiya heritage. I am, I think, justified in feeling rather proud of that heritage of ours, which, I am convinced, is second to none in the world. But I cannot be proud of that educational system and cultural ambiance which did not give me easy or early access to some of the most admirable aspects of that heritage, namely the great traditions that stem from Gautama Buddha and Jaina Mahavira.

In these days when narrow religious one-sidedness worsens into disturbingly distorted, dishonest, and fanatic if not Fascist, forms of totalitarian identity impositions, it may be useful to highlight some of the Buddhist thought and experience of the first seven centuries of this era.

These lectures may be taken as a modest effort to open up a less known aspect of our Bharatiya heritage. I am not intending to add to the corpus of our knowledge of Buddhism. I am hardly competent to attempt anything like that.

When Pythagoras the ancient Greek sage, who was a contemporary of Sri Buddha, was honored by his admirers with the title **Sophos** or "Wise One" he demurred with characteristic modesty by saying: "Please do not call me a Wise One or **Sophos**. I would much rather be known as a Friend of Wisdom, a **Philosophia**". Similarly, I must say that I am not a Buddhist, but only a Friend of Buddhism, a Philobuddhadharma, if you will forgive that uneasy mixture of Greek and Samskrit.

I wanted to say that I am a **Bodhisattva**, but I hesitate. Because that word sometimes denotes one who is close to Buddhahood; no, if I were to claim to be a Bodhisattva, it will be only in the sense that I am at the beginning of my pilgrimage to **bodhi** or **samyagsambodhi** which for me means true Enlightenment, so different from the Western Enlightenment which has so lamentably brainwashed our intellectual elite.

But I know that I have a long way to go yet. In my pilgrimage, the Bodhisattva ideal inspires me: filled with love and joy in the spirit, even in the midst of suffering; rejoicing when reviled; unresentful when ridiculed; blessing when cursed; bowing humbly to all, not puffed up with pride; compassionate to all, especially to the weak and the oppressed; desirous of giving freely and generously, even if not always succeeding; pursuing peace, eager for reconciliation, seeking the healing of nations and peoples as well as persons; striving to bring the body and the passions under control, intent on one-pointed meditation, making constant meditation and prayer a habit; wanting to be strong and kind enough to be a refuge to the weary and the lost, to comfort the broken hearted and the sorrowing; caring for all and willing to sacrifice oneself for the good of others; to seek a world with peace and justice where all can live a dignified life, searching and finding meaning and fulfilment. That is my Bodhisattva ideal; the present formulation of it is my own, an adaptation from the **Tathagataguhyasutra (Sikshasamuccaya of Santideva)**. To this **Bodhisattva ideal** I am committed, by virtue of seeking to follow my Master, Jesus Christ.

Nagarjuna followed that ideal, resolutely and with determination. Centuries before Sankara, Nagarjuna showed us how intellectual vigor can be combined with spiritual depth. For me as a humble student of world philosophy, I think this is the distinctive feature of Indian philosophy and spirituality – the total integration of mind and spirit. I do not find this in a Hegel or a Kant, in a Descartes or a Bacon, in a Rousseau or a Voltaire; I do find it in Plato and Plotinus, in Tao-Te and Hua-Yen, in Augustine and Jaspers, but definitely to a lesser degree than in Nagarjuna. For me I notice more intellectual-spiritual consistency and astonishing contemporary relevance in Nagarjuna than in Plato or Sankara.

I do not think that the thought of Nagarjuna has been significantly superseded in terms of ontology and epistemology, throughout these 1800 years of history, in any of the cultures of the world. Not only is his vision still fresh as the dawn; most of the philosophical problematics of the world, except perhaps the philosophies of science/technology and political economy, have been already anticipated by him more than a thousand years before – the problems of epistemology and knowledge, of causality and time, just to mention a few of the more prominent problems. Human thought has not significantly advanced beyond where Nagarjuna left it, on these basic issues of ontology and epistemology. And even our modern science/technology and our understanding of the goal and orientation of life will be significantly and perhaps radically altered if our planners and thinkers and scientists will pay careful attention to what this great Indian mind can show us.

But Nagarjuna was more than an academic philosopher. Above all, like Sri Buddha, Nagarjuna was a great Spiritual Master. We cannot do justice to the range and depth of his teaching in this brief paper. I proceed therefore to sample two aspects of his spiritual and intellectual heritage. The first is from his friendly letter or **Suhrillekha** addressed to his contemporary, the Satavahana King Gautamiputra, son of queen Balasri, the only Satavahana king known to have embraced Buddhadharma. Since the King was not a monk, we can take the **Suhrillekha** as an example of spiritual direction for the Buddhist lay people.

The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing who visited India in the 7th century writes thus about the **Suhrillekha**: "In India students learn this epistle in

verse early in the course of instruction, but the most devout make it their special object of study throughout their lives". Even today the Tibetans use it as a sort of standard manual of instruction. It is brief, but comprehensive. I can here only cite some excerpts, to whet your appetite. Unfortunately I have no access to a Sanskrit text of the Suhrillekha. The Tibetan text, with an English translation is available: **Nagarjuna's Letter to King Gautamiputra**, Motilal Banarsidass, 1978). The excerpts below are slightly adapted, and edited for style.

Six things remember and recollect always:
The Buddha, His Dharma, the Noble Sangha,
Generous giving, the Practice of Virtue, the Divine Beings. (4)

Practise the Ten Virtues of Body, Speech and Thought
(i.e. abstain from killing, stealing, and sexual immorality,
from lying, slander, malicious talk, and idle chatter,
from greed, bitterness and wrong belief)
Refrain from intoxicating drink,
Delight in a clean and wholesome way of living. (5)

Look upon these as enemies: Miserliness, Pretension and Deceit
Attachment to Property, Laziness, and Pride
Lust and Amorous Liaisons, Hatred of enemies,
Haughtiness about one's caste or bodily appearance,
Conceit about one's learning, youthfulness and strength. (12)

Be alert, ever heedful, mindful; heedfulness brings liberation and life;
Heedlessness brings bondage and death;
If you have been heedless in the past, become heedful
And you shall shine like the moon in a cloud-free sky. (13-14)

True penance lies in patience; give anger no chance to arise;
As the Buddha said, Give up Anger; thus you will enter the irrevers-
ible path of the Bodhisattva.
Do not complain: they abused me, they beat me up; they robbed me of
my property;

If you harbour enmity or resentment, bitterness and quarrels alone
result;

Give up harbouring enmity, and you will sleep more peacefully. (15-16)

Rightly understand the nature of existents, no existent is Ultimate
Truth

All is **sunya**; attach not yourself to the world of objects and concepts.
Remain indifferent, O Knower of the World, to the Eight worldly
dharmas

Gain and Loss, Happiness and Unhappiness,
Flattering words, Unpleasant words, Praise and Blame
They are all equal – equally unworthy of your mind. (29)

The Preceptor of gods and men has said
Contentment is the greatest wealth
So be content, whether you possess wealth or not
Being content without worldly wealth makes you truly rich. (34)

Zealously practise the five great virtues:
Attention of faith; Energy and effort;
Mindfulness and Meditation, and above all true Wisdom.
These shall be your true strength, your power,
Your true attainment. (45)

Thus it has been said:
The form is not the Self; neither does a Self possess form;
Self dwells not in form; neither does form dwell in a Self;
Also empty are the four other **skandhas**:
(Feeling, perception, predisposition and consciousness) (49)

O Noblest of Humans, all things are impermanent,
Without self, without refuge or protection, homeless;
Free your mind from **samsara**; it is like the pithless plantain tree.
(58)

The Sage declared:
From avidya or non-wisdom arise samskaras or predispositions
From **samskaras** Consciousness or vijnana arises

From vijñāna, comes **namarūpa** or Name and Form
From **namarūpa** come the six object-senses, the śādayatana
From the **śādayatanas** arise Contact or **Sparsa**
From **Sparsa** comes feeling or sensation or **Vedana**
On the ground of **vedana** trishna or **desire or craving arises**
From **trishna** comes clinging or **upadana**
From this clinging **bhava** or existence or becoming arises
From this **bhava**, jati or **birth arises**.
Where there is birth mountains of troubles arise
Duhkha or Distress, Jara, (disease) nara (old age)
Frustration, Fear of Death and all the rest.
Put an end to jati or birth and all these will cease. (109-11)

This teaching of Pratityasamutpada or Conditioned Co-origination
Is the profound and precious treasure of the Teaching of the Great
Victor;
One who sees this sees the most excellent Buddha, the Reality-Knower.

In order to attain peace, practice the Noble Eightfold Path:
Samyagdr̥ṣṭi or All-fitting Vision, Right Way of Living,
Right disciplined effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation
Right speech, Right Action, and Right Thinking (113)

O fearless One, thus says the Blessed One:
The Mind is the root of virtue. So discipline your mind.
This is good and wise counsel
No need to say any more. (117)

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There is a great deal in the present text of **Suhr̥llekha**, which I regard as later interpolations by lesser minds. A critical study of the text, with comparison of the Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan texts will help us along in this process. The discussion on heavens and hells, the passages about giving gifts to Brahmins, and other points need further examination.

THE DIALECTIC OR PRASANGIKA METHOD

We have time here only to illustrate briefly Nagarjuna's dialectic method, which he perfected. The Prasangika method, the main form of Madhyamaka argumentation, is to take your adversary's arguments and refute them by showing their weaknesses and inconsistencies - **reductio ad absurdum**. One's own thesis or **pratijna** which forms the **poorvapaksha** of a three-tier argument; the adversary's counter-argument is a **prasajya-pratsedha** or negation of a proposition. When that counter-argument is reduced to absurdity by a syllogism, the original **pratijna** stands established.

But Nagarjuna claimed that he has no **pratijna** or proposition to offer; even his statement that all is **sunya** is not to be taken as a proposition valid at all levels. His attack is directed against all forms of Realism - Samkhya, Vaibhasika (a Buddhist sect of the Sarvastivada tradition) or Prachina-nyaya.

For me personally it is Nagarjuna's refutation of Realism that makes him extremely relevant to our time. Realism can mean many things in western usage. To some it means the reality of universals, apart from the particulars. To the Machiavellians it means simply not being bound by ethical considerations in the exercise of power. In western philosophy it means the belief that matter, things, objects, have "real" existence independent of our perception of them.

This view, that things are actually as they appear to us, objectively, independent of our subjective perception of them, was once the view-point of modern science. But Quantum Physics clearly shows that the observing subject is inescapably a part of the observed object, and that "things in themselves" cannot be known by any mind. But most of us continue to be "Naive Realists", not finding any need to question the "reality" of the world of the objects of our perception. Immanuel Kant had sought to demonstrate already in the 18th century that the concept is a joint creation of certain effects created on us by the object and the structure of the knowing subject's mind.

"Realism" is a superstition; science does not claim any more that things are real. But ordinary people keep clinging to this superstition, without stopping to examine it. This is true also for Government thinking and planning as well. Our educational system also perpetuates the superstition and instils into children's minds. The end result is a consumerist civilisation and the commodity fetishism of our culture and our political economy. It is in the re-examination of this "naive realism" that Nagarjuna can help us, above all.

Let me now proceed to give a sample of Nagarjuna's basic affirmation about the nature of reality. It is not a positive proposition or **pratjna**; it is more of a negation or **pratishedha** of other peoples' propositions.

Nagarjuna: Na svato napi parato na dvabhyam napi ahetutah
utpanna jatu vidyante bhavah kvacana kecana

Neither of itself, nor of some other, neither from both
nor uncaused
Nowhere is known any existent coming into being
MadhKar 1.1

Adversary: Sarvesam bhavanam sarvatra na vidyate svabhavascet
Tvadvacanam asvabhavam na nivartayitum svabhavamalam

If the intrinsic nature of existents everywhere does not exist
Then your statement has no intrinsic nature and cannot negate
intrinsic nature.
VigrVyav I.1

Nagarjuna: Hetupratyayasamagr³ya^m ca prthak capi madvaco na yati
Nanu sunyatvam siddham bhavanam asvabhavatvat

If my statement exist in the cause and conditions of it, or
independently of them
Then the sunyata of existents is established by their not having
intrinsic nature

In other words, Nagarjuna negates all svabhava for the bhavas or existents. His adversary argues that if all is sunya, then the statement that all is sunya is also nisvabhava and therefore sunya. Nagarjuna rejoins that if his own statement were not nihsvabhava and therefore not sunya, then his statement that all is sunya would not be universally true, for the statement, if it were true would be a contradiction of itself. Therefore Nagarjuna says that his statement that all is sunya should not be taken as a truth with its own intrinsic nature.

He goes on to say: All existents are sunya, because they arise only under certain conditions, i.e. **pratityasamutpanna**; they are all hetu-pratyapeksha, or dependent on causes; but existents have a function which they fulfil in the **samvrtisatya** or level of everyday reality. My statement also has the function of affirming the **nihsvabhavata** of all existents. But in itself, my statement is also, **sunya, nihsvabhava**.

In the *Vigrahavyavartani*, (31), Nagarjuna raises for the first time in human history the problem of all epistemology, or in our language pramanavicara. It does not matter how many basic pramanas you hold to: just pratyaksha like the Carvaka, or Pratyaksha and Anumana as in Dinnaga, or adding Agama as a third in many systems, or adding a fourth called Upamana in the Naiyayika system which Nagarjuna takes as his target; the question of Nagarjuna is the same: By what pramanas did you get your list of pramanas?

Yadi ca pramanatas te tesam tesam prasiddhir arthanam
Tesam punah prasiddhim bruhi katham te pramananam

If by such and such ^{pr}amanas such and such objects are
established for you

Please tell me by what pramanas these are established for you.

As Nagarjuna goes on to argue, if the pramanas are established through other pramanas, then the series can go on in infinite regression, which is absurd. If on the contrary you are trying to establish those pramanas without basing them on any other pramanas, then your **vada** is finished; it has

Nagarjuna

no basis. If the pramanas are self-established, then your means of true cognition as you call them are independent of the objects of true cognition , then what relation can they have to those objects? (41).

I want to conclude this lecture here. My purpose was only to whet your appetite by sampling some of Nagarjuna's powerful prasangika logic.

THE SYMPHONIC TWAIN

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA, THE MUTUALLY COMPLEMENTARY TEAM

THEIR MESSAGE TO THE TWENTYFIRST CENTURY

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

The contrast in personality between the two great Bengali spiritual giants of the last century, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, becomes all the more striking when one takes into account the fact that the two complemented and relied upon each other in a remarkably unusual way, in a manner that has been described as "symphonic".

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, when he goes into Nirvikalpa Samadhi as he often did, gets totally out of this world, trembling in ecstasy, knowing no distinction of knower, known and knowledge, experiencing no awareness of objects around, totally absorbed in that bliss which Romain Rolland described as 'oceanic joy'. Even when not in Samadhi, Ramakrishna was a mirthful child, full of play and tricks, ever laughing and teasing. Vivekananda on the other hand is always sombre, intense and passionate, rearing to go charging, brimming with vibrant physical vitality, ever productive of the most pungent rhetoric, quick to condemn what he disapproves, eager to invoke the Greek (is it also not quite Indian?) virtue of manliness, "a cyclone in a monk's garb", as Rajiv Gandhi put it. (Broadcast talk on the 125th anniversary of Vivekananda's birth - 12th January 1988). Sri Ramakrishna was all laughter and parables; gentle digs that prick bubbles of vanity, little tales that teach more than tomes. Vivekananda was, on the other hand, all fire and thunder, shouting to the masses in the same breath: "Renounce and sacrifice!" as well as "Stand up and strike!".

And yet they seemed really and deeply to need each other; Sri Ramakrishna yearned for that bundle of energy, Narendra, to be always by his side, often showing great anguish when the young superpackage of vitality failed to show up for a long time. As for Vivekananda his words about the Master have always a touching humility often not so evident in his ebullient personality: "I am the servant of a man who has passed away. I am only the messenger"; or again, "if there has been a word of truth, a word of spirituality, that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my master; only the mistakes are mine".

I wish to submit that if we are to seek for a message for the Twentyfirst century, we should seek it from this "Symphonic Twain" and not from one of them alone. Sri Ramakrishna felt that he needed Vivekananda to spread his ideas; there need be no doubt both that Vivekananda would have been almost nothing special without the Master, and that the Master's profound personality could not have found its way into western consciousness without the persuasive mediation of Vivekananda, who put his own stamp on the Master's teaching.

Vivekananda had the unusual capacity to pick up some of the better ideas from western thought: the idea that the worker or the poor Sudra as the oppressed class to whom social liberation has to come first; the simple affirmations of a theory of class domination in all cultures, an unsophisticated socialism; the democratic ideal and so on. Like Gandhi, the Swami sought to root these ideas in the Indian tradition. But he was way ahead of his time. There need not be any doubt that both Gandhi and Nehru were deeply influenced by him. As Nehru himself put it:

"I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him (Swami Vivekananda) and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings, and they would learn much from them....He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders...of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement at a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today."

Mahatma Gandhi too took many cues from Vivekananda. Where the Swami spoke of the Sudra as the oppressed, the Mahatma spoke of the cast-out castes, once called the untouchables, the Harijans or Dalits of today. Gandhi developed the concept of Sarvodaya out of the inspiration given by the Swami, as also his frequent use of the Puranic concept of Daridranarayana. The grasp of truth and the finality of love are ideas which Gandhi may have found elsewhere, but they were so evident in Vivekananda, and there is no doubt that the convictions took such a grip on Gandhi, because he had read Vivekananda.

I want here to highlight just one fundamental perception of this insuperable twain, apropos the mutual relation of God, humanity and world, which may lead us to some of our own revised perceptions of that basic relationship, as a message of the Twain for the Twentyfirst century.

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THE GOD-HUMANITY-WORLD UNITY

There can, for us humans, be only three realities, if they are three at all: the knowing self (humanity), the known universe, and the Reality that upholds both; God, world and Man, for those who can accept that terminology. Most people with some knowledge of modern philosophy of science would say that it is not possible any longer to conceive the subject and the object, or man and world, as two separate realities; they constitute one inseparable whole. The environmentalist would insist on that inseparability, for the sake of human survival, if not for philosophical reasons. The relation of Ultimate Reality to that inseparable whole is seldom debated in our secularised societies, for modern science has enforced its taboo on any God-talk in science. And modern science continues to be the prevailing dogmatic system of our time.

Swami Vivekananda, rooted in the ancient Sankhya tradition, (probably pre-Vedic, reflected not only in the Vedas and the Upanishads as well as in Ramayana and Mahabharata, including in the Bhagavadgita, but also in Jaina and Buddhist Scriptures) has a noble and dynamic vision of that inseparable unit, the universe, which of course includes humanity. For him, it is Prakrti, which is by no means what the West calls Nature, or Phusis in Greek. Prakrti is primeval matter-energy or the stuff of mind-matter in perfect equilibrium, always existent, going through rhythmic pulses of pralaya-vilaya, the unmanifest manifesting itself through that process, as Mahat, the manifest universe, of which only the more **sthula** elements are open to our senses.

Out of this Mahat, which is the **vivarta** form of **prakrti**, comes the three modes of vibration, the **sattva**, the **rajas** and the **tamas**, and **ahamkara** which is the source of the world we perceive, composed of **tanmatras** or the **infinitesimal energy waves**, which in turn give rise to both the **perceiving subjectivity** (composed of **external and internal senses and manas, buddhi** etc), and the **perceived subtle and gross qualities of matter-energy** which we perceive as the 'objective' world.

According to Samkhya, what human beings perceive or conceive as God in their ordinary consciousness is nothing more than Prakrti, the unmanifest aspect of Mahat. Because that ordinary consciousness itself is only an aspect of Mahat, the manifest aspect of prakrti. Beyond prakrti is Purusha, the unwitting and unchanging cause of all that changes. Purusha is neither intelligence nor will, It is simple, pure, perfect,

**RADHAKRISHNAN - BRIDGE-BUILDER OR STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
BETWEEN EAST & WEST.
(Bishop Paul Gregories)**

Sarveppalli Radhakrishnan, unlike Swami Vivekananda, or Rabindranath Tagore, really never carried the battle against Western culture into enemy territory. *He had a benevolent capacity to agree with everybody. He did not force his views on anybody.* Thus it came about that Prof. C.E.M. Joad could call him Bridge-builder between East and West. The West liked "the sound of the beautifully modulated voice conveying in a series of exquisitely turned phrases an equal mastery of the intricacies of the English language and of Hindu metaphysics". That was Professor Joad's own language of praise for the young brahmin boy from Tiruttani who grew up to be a "philosophical bilingualist" (Professor Muirhead's term) that could enthrall Western audiences with a revised but not quite standard version of ancient Indian wisdom, through the painless medium of the well-medulated cadences of Oxford English.

It was the charm of his personality, *the warm and compassionate sympathy with which he dealt with all* the conviction with which he commended Indian thought, and the gleam and polish of his language and style that made his presentation of Upanishadic thought as a form of intuitionist absolute idealism, so attractively *well done* to his Western audiences.

While in one sense Radhakrishnan merits the title of Lokacharya by Indian standards, having completed his commentaries on the Prasthanathrayi (the Upanishads, the Brahmasūtra and the Bhagavadgītā), it was as a preacher of "a spiritual view of the Universe" that he commended himself to the West. The rigorous Indian logic that meticulously enunciates its epistemology before going on to the elucidation of fundamental ontology, if Radhakrishnan had presented it as it is to the West, could not have been easily comprehended by the cultured and intelligent but philosophically untrained audiences that he faced in the West.

Lokanath Bhattacharya gives us an ~~admirable~~ admirable summary of Radhakrishnan's main doctrine:

"His main and central teaching is that the spiritual should be given primacy, and reason and humanism, or science and man, should be explained in the light of the spiritual. The true Absolute is the spirit; our attempt to turn reason into an absolute has ended in some of the unhuman and inhuman results of science; and a similar view of man as an absolute has led to conflicting political philosophies and conflagrations. A true understanding of man requires viewing him from the standpoint of the spiritual".¹

1. D.M. Datta and P.T. Raju (ed). Introduction to Radhakrishnan - Comparative Studies in Philosophy presented in honour of his

That, of course, sounds more like the plea of a preacher than the premiss of a philosophy. But it was close ~~enough~~ enough to the Hegelian idealism after which the West still secretly hankered but to which it was forbidden to return. And for the weary middle-class intellectual of the West, frustrated with the incapacity of an unphilosophical bourgeois materialism to satisfy the spirit and frightened by the capacity of a student marxist materialism to upset his comfort and to drive him into conflict, this seething idealism from the East provided a faint glimmer of hope that all would be well and life in middle class comfort could continue unruffled.

All this is not to minimise the historical importance of India's philosopher-president, but merely to plead that the bridge he built between East and West should now be subjected to a ^othrough examination by deeper philosophical reflection, to see whether it can stand the weight of the traffic.

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Radhakrishnan could ^{see} be a bridge-builder between East and West, because he was fortunate enough to ^{have} become well-acquainted with the thought of both. In fact it was the arrogance of the West, especially of the Protestant Christian West, that drove him to a deeper study of the Eastern tradition. The sensitive and meditative child of conservative Brahmin parents was rudely shaken up when at the Lutheran Mission High School, Tirupati, where he studied from his 8th year to the 12th (1896-1900; he was born in 1888), the missionary teachers violently abused his Hindu ~~heritage~~ heritage and commended the Christian gospel in its Lutheran form as the only absolute truth. The rude onslaught of the West continued, though with more noticeable refinement, at Voorhees College, Vellore (1900-1904). It was at Madras Christian College, under the tutelage of that missionary master-teacher, Professor A.G.Hogg, that he learned to react with equanimity to the Western heritage. For his B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy which he did at Madras Christian during the years 1904-1908, he did not need to know any Indian philosophy, for the Madras University curriculum, laid down by Europeans or ^{by} Europeanized Indians, did not regard any such acquaintance to be necessary or worthwhile. His M.A. thesis, however, was on the Ethics of the Vedanta.

It was only in April 1909, at the age of 21, when he was appointed as a teacher in the Department of Philosophy at the Presidency College, Madras, that he began a systematic study of the Indian heritage. His sensitive soul had been badly bruised by the rude affronts against the Hindu tradition that it had to bear silently

greatness that he did not grow up to be anti-Christian or anti-western. He was always the perfect gentleman, without rancor or bitterness in his soul against the West or against Christianity.

It is of course true that many westerners later did more than compensate for the rudeness of some of his early teachers. It was Professor J.H. Muirhead's invitation in 1917 to write the Library of Philosophy volume on Indian Philosophy that established Radhakrishnan's reputation in the West. A year later the 30 year-old Radhakrishnan became Professor of Philosophy in the University of Mysore, when his classmate (with whom he was bracketed as first in rank in the philosophy M.A. Class) and close friend K.C. Chacko was already well on his way to the building up of U.C. College, Alwaye.

While at Mysore, his contributions to British intellectual journals like Mind and the Hibbert Journal, made him famous in Britain, and with his appointment to the King George Chair at the University of Calcutta in 1921, Radhakrishnan's name began to stand for an acceptable version of Indian thought to the British. Unlike Tagore or the Ramakrishna missionaries, what Radhakrishnan gave to the West was in recognizably Western terms. His interpretation of Hinduism, especially in the Upanishads lectures given at Manchester College in Oxford (1926), later published as The Hindu View of Life, presented Religious Experience as a universal phenomenon, self-certifying, empirical, life-transforming, insight-providing, essentially of the same kind as what John Wesley preached in terms of the Methodist Gospel. The main difference was this - the Christian Gospel was authoritarian and exclusive, the Hindu Gospel was gentler, being more tolerant and all-inclusive, generous to all forms of religious experience and accepting all of them as authentic. This was more acceptable to the almost equally all-embracing and tolerant Anglican temper than the stouter Calvinism which excluded all other forms of religious experience.

Radhakrishnan, remaining a Hindu, was able to absorb from Barth and Tillich, from Bosanquet and Carpenter, from Jesus and Mohammed, from Hegel and Bergson, and to present Hinduism as something akin to the thought of all these men.

Religious Experience was central and basic. It was one reality that all religious mystics experienced, but became ^{use} "Religious experience is.... the presentment of the real already influenced by the ideas and prepossessions of the perceiving mind", each religious genius spells out the mystery of God according to his own endowment, personal, racial and historical"².

What Radhakrishnan failed to do was to provide us with the criterion by which he could himself say that the conception of

2. The Hindu View of Life. cited Radhakrishna Reader p. 137.

God held by the majority of Hindus is wrong. It cannot be the case that every conception is equally right, though it can be admitted that all may be partly wrong. Radhakrishnan admitted in this Oxford lecture, that Hindus are guilty, in the name of tolerance of all forms, of protecting all superstitious rites and customs, including socially misguided ones like untouchability and Sathi. When Radhakrishnan, for example says that "it is necessary for the Hindu leaders to hold aloft the highest conception of God and work steadily on the minds of the worshippers so as to effect an improvement in their conceptions", he naturally implies the grades of higher and lower, better and worse, in the conceptions of God. He would have been philosophically sharper if he had given us a more precise indication of the standards and measuring sticks he uses or recommends for the evaluation of the varying conceptions of God.

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His ambition was of course to provide us with a "supreme spiritual ideal" that would be acceptable and applicable to East and West alike, and the bridge he sought to build was in terms of the clarification of that "supreme spiritual ideal".

Radhakrishnan, following in this regard German theologians like Adolf Harnack and Karl Barth, criticizes the Greek heritage for having misled the West in the direction of "science and the pursuit of truth for its own sake". Only those more fully acquainted with the Greek tradition could have told him that Greece too, like India, had produced a variety of views and approaches, and that there was not a single "Greek heritage" that stood for "science and the pursuit of truth for its own sake". If Radhakrishnan's associations and interests had been more with the common people rather than with the aristocratic few, he could probably have seen more clearly that greed and rapacity, bred through centuries of wars of aggression and later through the crusades and the colonial experience developing into modern capitalism, was behind the sickness of the West, rather than any so-called Greek heritage. Science and the pursuit of truth became corrupt when they were placed at the service of rapacity and greed.

Let us examine the more positive aspects of Radhakrishnan's universal creed. It has basically three elements:

- a) a unitive consciousness (vidya) based on faith (abhaya) and love (ahimsa)
- b) the unity of all Mankind and of all that exists
- c) the Primacy of the spiritual, and the universality of religious experience

Radhakrishnan opposes these to nationalist politics, humanist ethics and rationalist philosophy which characterizes the present Western civilisation, from which educated Indians have also imbibed deeply.

It is this proposed bridge of three planks that we need to examine today in closer detail and add some specifications, if the structure proposed is found to be basically sound.

There can be little doubt in the mind of most thinking people that the three elements do have, at least prima facie, a universal appeal. Many Western thinkers would today readily agree that the West has gone too far in emphasizing the individual and the objective, at the expense of the community and the subjective-objective ~~relationship~~ harmony which alone can be faithful to the demands of love. The need to transcend national frontiers and false barriers artificially created by the Western mind as for example between ~~man~~ natural and supernatural, or between nature and history or again between nature and culture, is today widely recognized. The protest against materialism in both its philosophical and its pragmatic forms has also become strong in East and West.

The weakness of the structure, however, lies in the lack of clarity, philosophically speaking, of the concepts used. Radhakrishnan's use of the term 'spiritual' and 'religion' calls for a great deal of further elucidation. He has given us no adequate criterion for seeing the relationship between the material and the spiritual, between God and the universe, and between Man and the rest of reality. In failing to clarify these three fundamental points, his references to 'spiritual' and 'religious' must needs remain problematic to the philosophical enquirer.

While we can accept the basic ^ocontours of the structure proposed by our late lamented Philosopher-President, the reason why it is not taken seriously by thinking people East or West may be traced to this fundamental lack of specificity. Clarity is to be sought on the following three questions:

a) It is not possible to ~~say~~ say that all religions are equally good or equally true. We all do object to a religion which teaches fanaticism, religious wars and human sacrifice. Some religions like the new cults of ~~man~~ Satanism rising in the West cannot be given such blanket approval. Gandhi himself had to fight against certain aspects of religious practice like untouchability which implies that he had certain criteria by which he could discern what was good and what was bad in any religion. We need to elucidate these criteria more carefully before making careless statements about the ^{equal} validity of religions.

b) A universal religion should be in a position to give at least a tentative interpretation of what significance man's actions in this time-world may have, apart from contributing to one's own personal salvation. Are the poverty and squalor, misery and injustice, suffering and anguish that we have all around us to be ignored, and religion be limited merely to the search of the individual for union with the ~~supreme~~ the ascent of the Jivatma to the Brahmaloka? Why are we

Is sadharmya with God to be achieved only by individuals, or are there norms for regulating the collective life of society also which ~~are~~ are related to the Bhavarupa of Isvara? Is religion's goal merely to produce siddhapurushas or does it have something to do with the structures of society also? No universal religion which does not spell out its relation to the problems of national and international economic injustice, exploitation and oppression, can have much relevance to the world of today.

c) A universal religion today should have clearer ways of conceiving the unity of mankind, and the unity between humanity and the rest of the cosmos, and be able to put the concept of ultimate reality or Brahman or Isvara or God in the context of these two basic unities. It is at this point that the criticism of scientific rationality as something which has contributed to the alienation between human persons and also between humanity and the cosmos should come in. Radhakrishnan only began that criticism in a very elementary way. We need to pursue this further, in order to call in question the fundamental axia of a civilization based on science and technology and in order to lay the foundation of another based on more adequate notions, of the unitive consciousness. We will have to do this fundamental metaphysical task with greater precision and clarity than Radhakrishnan. We will need to give more specific content to terms like "religion" and "spiritual", and relate our religious quest to the concerns and questions of liberal humanism and marxist socialism which are the ideologies in which many people have been trained and formed.

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Radhakrishnan, as a fairly competent structural engineer, with considerable experience of the British West and the Indian East, has drawn the preliminary sketch of the structure for a bridge between East and West. The specific drawings and measurements will have to be added by competent draughtsmen, but my suspicion is that when this is done, the proposed basic structure itself will call for some modifications. But Radhakrishnan's was a great effort, necessary and worthwhile for humanity. Let us now get a team of engineers and draughtsmen and carry on the project to complete its specifications. Meanwhile let us be on the look-out for the resources and devices necessary to implement the project, for that is a much more gigantic task than completing the drawings and specifications.

SABDA/SAKTI AND WORD/SPIRIT

A SURFACE ANALYSIS OF TWO CONCEPT SYSTEMS

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

Scholars are sometimes besieged by an often unjustified desire to find too easy parallelisms between surface-similar concepts in two radically different thought systems. As an instance of the perils of this temptation, we shall look briefly at two such concept clusters in Ancient Indian and in Mediterranean Christian systems of perceiving and articulating the nature of Reality: **sabda/sakti** and **word/spirit**.

The concept of Sakti is definitely pre-Brahmin in its origin in India. Most of our very ancient systems of reality-perception in India are sakti-based in one way or another, parallel to **mana** and other similar notions in all ancient cultures. We see marks of this ancient concept of Sakti in current Shaivite as well as Tantric traditions. **Sakti** is the coiled serpent - the **kundali** or **Kundalini** - waiting in the lowest **chakra of the subtle body**, the **muladhara**, to be awakened, and once awakened, to pass through the various **chakras**, ultimately leading to self-realization and bliss.

Sabda on the other hand seems more distinctively Brahmanic, best exemplified in the concept of **nadabrahma**, the original cosmic vibration of sound that creates, holds up and guides the universe.

Both **sakti** and **sabda** have their parallels in the Judaeo-Christian tradition of West Asia. The **sakti** concept is central to that awesome name of God - Yahweh-Tsebaoth, often translated "LORD of the Hosts", but literally the "He-Who-is of the Powers". Sometimes these powers or **sakties** of Yahveh can be personalized, but in essence, the Powers are in plural, and always attached to the One God-Creator. The powers, sometimes also called the principalities, can be opposed to the will of God and have in the end to be brought to subordination and control by Christ himself. If at times the Powers can revolt, in Judaism and Christianity, they are always subject to the authority and control of God. They have no independent existence as in some forms of Hinduism.

In the Indian tradition Sakti is a single power latent both in Nature and in the Human body-soul, the latter being a microcosm of the former. It is a goddess, the passive power, waiting for the union with the active power in the **Sivalinga**. For the Hebrews on the other hand, 'Powers' are always multiple, and have no independent role or existence.

The concept of **sabda** however reveals more thorough-going parallels between the two traditions. **Sabda** is Brahman; sabda is with Brahman from the beginning; without the **sabda** nothing at all can come into existence. It is like the Hebrew **dabar** and the Greek **logos** in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. It is God or Brahman giving birth to Himself, in order to create the universe; but even after giving birth to that which is perfect, the original begetter remains perfect and undiminished:

Poornamadah; poornamidam
Poornad poornamudacyate
Poornasya poornamadaya
Poornamevavasishyate

Wholeness there; wholeness here
This wholeness arises from that Wholeness
Take away wholeness from Wholeness
Wholeness alone remains.

In the Christian scriptures, the relation between **Theos** and **Logos** is largely analogous, though the terms used to denote that relation are noticeably different. The **logos** is **Theos** (Theos en ho logos); the logos is also ever existent face to face with **Theos**. The author of the Epistle to the Colossians (2:10) puts it this way:

In Him dwells the whole fullness of Godhead bodily
En autoi katoikei pan to pleroma tes Theotetos somatikos.

We should not forget, however, that in the Indian tradition, the word **sabda** is used in two different meanings. The technical meaning of **sabda**, apart from its ordinary meaning of just 'sound', is that of one of the four **pramanas** (pratyaksha, anumana, upamana and **sabda**), especially in the Navya Nyaya tradition. Here Sabda can mean the scriptures, the words of the Guru, and even a good saying by any Sage (Apta-vacana). In this usage **sabda** simply means spiritual testimony, wherever it comes from.

The more metaphysical sense of **sabda** occurs in the concept of **nadabrahma**, which literally means 'sound god'. This need not mean sound made by the 'word'; it could be, as in later iconography, simply the drum-beats of the **Siva-tandava**, the cosmos-creating dance of Siva. It could also explain the significance of the chanted Vedas and other mantras, which get part of their efficacy from being in consonance with the original sound-wave which constantly creates and sustains the universe.

Bhartrhari (d.651) in his **Vakyapadiya** expounds this doctrine of **sabdadvaita**, and develops a new non-dualism based on the concept that the original creative resonance is the only reality, from which everything else has come to be. It is

that same original resonance which then reverberated in the Vedic chants, and would re-echo the original creative **sabda** if properly recited today.

The Tantric tradition also attaches great importance to various sounds, some of them somewhat rough and crude, as necessary for self-realisation. It seems thus that the concept of creative **sabda** is shared by both Vedic and Tantric traditions.

A surface-similar concept in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is Word, **logos** in Greek, **dabar** in Hebrew, as we have already noted above. **Dabar** in Hebrew, normally means both the word and the thing signified by the word. In Greek, **logos** becomes a term deeply philosophical in meaning. The Christians, in saying that **logos** is God, had to speak however of the Father as God, as distinct in Person from the **Logos** who was identified with the Son, with Jesus as the once-for-all incarnation of the Eternal Only-Begotten.

The Hindu tradition speaks of two aspects of the Brahman, the Sagunabrahma as Iswara, and the Nirgunabrahman as the predicateless Absolute who is conceptually beyond comprehension. But there is no possibility of two distinct persons, one **saguna** and the other Nirguna. Brahman is one without a second - **ekamadvitiam**. Nothing like the three-in-one God of Christianity, nor the concept of the once-for-all Incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son, would be compatible with the Hindu tradition, or with most other religious traditions like Islam or Buddhism.

Attempts to paste over this unbridgeable gap between the two traditions have failed to withstand rigorous examination. One can find many parallelisms between the concept of Brahman and the concept of God the Father. Both are beyond being and beyond comprehension.

Christian Fathers put a high emphasis on the "incomprehensibility of God", a somewhat central concept in Eastern Patristics. But then they went on, paradoxically enough, to talk about Three Persons in the Trinity, one in their is-ness or **ousia**, but distinct in their personhood. If they had not, we could at least have argued that since both Brahman and God are beyond being and beyond concept, they are in fact identical. Both Christians and Hindus, after having asserted the incomprehensibility and indescribability of the Absolute, go on to give conceptual qualifications to that Unqualified One. The differences begin to appear at this level of qualifications of the Unqualified One.

The same would apply to concepts like **sabda** and **logos**. One can find many parallelisms, but the concepts belong to two different worlds of discourse and should not be too easily identified with each other without reference to the

world of discourse in which each concept receives its particular shade of meaning.

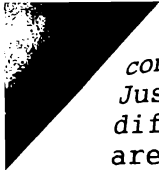
The situation is about the same if we try to compare the concepts of **sakti** and **pneuma** or spirit. The spirit in Hebrew is **ruach**, in Greek **pneuma**. Both literally mean breath or wind. The Spirit of God, Ruach-Elohim, which was brooding over the primordial waters of chaos in Genesis 1:2 is the same Ruach-Peh, or the Breath of His Mouth which in Psalm 33:6 is the Creative Word. The Pneuma Hagios, or Holy Spirit is the same as the creative **logos Theou** or Word of God. While the Father, the Son or Word, and the Spirit are three distinct Persons, none of them exist or act without the others.

The teaching about the Trinity, and the teaching about the Incarnation or permanent Man-becoming of the Son of God are the two keys to the Christian world of discourse. When seeking parallelisms with concepts from other worlds of discourse, care should be taken to see the extent to which these concepts fit into the Trinity-Incarnation paradigm. Indian thought, on the other hand, has many worlds of discourse: samkhya, yoga, vedanta, visishtadvaita, dvaita and so on in Hinduism alone. Buddhist thought is even more pluralist and diverse and developed many worlds of discourse, as is the case with Jaina thought.

Sometimes parallelisms are too facilely identified with each other, without taking into account the world of discourse from which the two surface-similar concepts have been taken. It seems wiser to leave these concepts as similar in some ways, but still radically different when one takes into account their respective paradigm structures. It does not take us very far if we keep on trying to prove the ancient false dictum that all religions teach the same thing in essence; the differences are vitally important sometimes. And it seems God has ordained it that way. The tragedy occurs when these differences are used by the religions to pillory and calumnify each other.

It is interesting however, to note that the differences always occur at the conceptual level, and not at the primordial, trans-conceptual. Even **sunya** becomes problematic when conceptualised, even in negative terms.

Differences arise from conceptualisation, and belong at that level. However since most of our discourse has to be at the conceptual level, it may be unwise to ignore them or wish them away in the interest of a false dictum about the essential identity of all religions. The conceptual differences not only divide people, but even become bitter bones of



contention among rival factions of one and the same religion. Just ignoring them does not work. Once the sub-surface differences, as well as differences in the worlds of discourse are properly recognized, it should be possible to go beyond these differences, to find that abiding Unity in the One Who is beyond all form and concept.

It is to this end that Mataji's commendable effort ultimately draws our attention.